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&

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Greatest guitarist ever? Beck? Clapton? Page? Van Halen? There's no doubt they're all absolute masters of their chosen instrument, musicians who elevated what could be done with six strings and a couple of pieces of wood into an artform. But when it comes to the best of the best, there's only one name in the running: James Marshall Hendrix.

Of course, if you're reading this, you know that already. We don't need to tell you how this kid from Seattle revolutionised not just the guitar but music as a whole in a little over four years. Or how his legacy has only grown in the decades since his death in 1970 at the age of just 27. Or how he might not have been human, but some genius interdimensional alien with a hotline to the gods. Okay, that last one might be overstating the case. But only a little.

This very special magazine is dedicated to the life and times of Jimi Hendrix. Inside, you'll find the very best articles and interviews from the archives of *Classic Rock* and *The Blues* magazines, charting his career from birth to death and beyond, diving deep into the making of such classic albums as *Are You Experienced*, *Axis: Bold As Love* and *Electric Ladyland*, revisiting his landmark gigs at Monterey, Woodstock and Atlanta, and exploring everything from his semi-mythical jam with The Doors' Jim Morrison to the mystery of his final days. Factor in a rundown of the 20 greatest Hendrix songs, as voted by you, and it's the ultimate tribute to one of the greatest musicians to have ever walked the earth. Enjoy…

Dave

Dave Everley – Editor

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NEW RISING SON

Jimi Hendrix didn't arrive fully formed. Raised in a troubled household, he spent years perfecting his playing and mystique on the R&B circuit. This is the story of the birth of the legend.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Jimi Hendrix wasn't the first teenager to fall under Elvis Presley's spell. But it was actually his backing band that made the biggest impression. Hendrix was just 14 years old when he saw the King at Sick's Stadium in Seattle on 1 September 1957. And while he was intoxicated by Presley's stage show, he found himself irresistibly drawn to guitarist Scotty Moore, bassist Bill Black and drummer D.J. Fontana. "Those musicians were really something," he marvelled later. "They made playing music seem like the best thing in the world!"

Already an aspiring guitarist, Hendrix owned just a single-string ukulele at the time, retrieved from a neighbour's rubbish. He played as best he could by aping Moore's licks on *Hound Dog* and others. It wasn't until the following summer that Al Hendrix, Jimi's father, bought him a second-hand acoustic guitar for five dollars. Soaking up the music of blues greats like B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Elmore James and Robert Johnson, Hendrix retreated to his room and practised endlessly.

It proved a refuge of sorts from a difficult early life. Born Johnny Allen Hendrix in November 1942, though renamed James Marshall Hendrix four years later, his parents struggled to make ends meet in Seattle. Alcoholism and in-fighting became a fixture of their on-off marriage. They eventually divorced in 1951.

The eldest of five siblings, three of whom were given up for adoption or foster care, Hendrix and his brother Leon were sent to live under the custody of their father. When their mother Lucille died from a ruptured spleen in February 1958, aged just 32, Al refused to allow his sons to attend the funeral.

Hendrix sought to escape through music. He joined his first band, The Velvetones, in mid-1958, though his enthusiasm was dampened by his inability to hear his acoustic guitar amid the noise. A year later, after his father had finally agreed to buy him an electric guitar, a white Supro Ozark, Hendrix had graduated to another local outfit, The Rocking Kings.

Dropping out of high school, his time was spent either in bands or in trouble on the streets. In May 1961, aged 18, he was arrested for joyriding in a stolen car and hauled up before a judge. A counsellor suggested he enlist in the army. For Hendrix, it was a no-brainer. "If I ended up in jail," he reckoned, "I knew I wouldn't be able to play guitar."

After basic training, the teenage Jimi was duly assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell in Kentucky. It was here that Hendrix began to make lasting connections. More committed to his red Silvertone Danelectro guitar than his formal duties, he started playing the army clubs. He soon hooked up with bassist (and fellow serviceman) Billy Cox, who was so floored by Hendrix's style that he described him as a cross between "John Lee Hooker and Beethoven." The pair formed a loose ensemble, The Casuals, and began performing at weekends.

The official verdict on Hendrix's time in the army was damning. "It is my opinion that Private Hendrix will never come up to the standards required of a soldier," wrote his platoon sergeant. He was discharged him within the year, freeing him from all distractions. He and Cox took their band, renamed The King Kasuals, to Nashville, where they enjoyed a residency at the Club Del Morocco from late 1962 onwards.

During his time in Tennessee, Hendrix adopted the gimmick of playing guitar with his teeth, inspired by the likes of fellow bandmate Alphonso Young. He also sought a new challenge. While his association with Cox would resurface much later in Band Of Gypsys and The Cry Of Love, Hendrix accepted an offer to join 'Gorgeous' George Odell's touring band. "He was a character from the get-go," Hendrix told biographer Sharon Lawrence. "He wore a fancy silver wig and flashy clothes. I had nothing to lose."

This was Hendrix's entrée into the network of largely Southern venues known as the Chitlin' Circuit, conceived for black entertainers in the age of racial segregation. The package tour he joined included Aretha Franklin and Hank ▷

"It is my opinion that Private Hendrix will never come up to the standards required of a soldier."

official US Army report

MAIN: GETTY

Father and son: Al Hendrix with a three-year-old Jimi in 1945.

Twist and shout: Hendrix (far left) with The Isley Brothers at Harlem's Rockland Palace, June 19, 1964.

ALL GETTY

Ballard & The Midnighters. Before long, Hendrix became a member of The Midnighters themselves, though his flamboyant stage antics brought him into direct conflict with Ballard, who simply wanted him to play what he was told. He was fired after a couple of months.

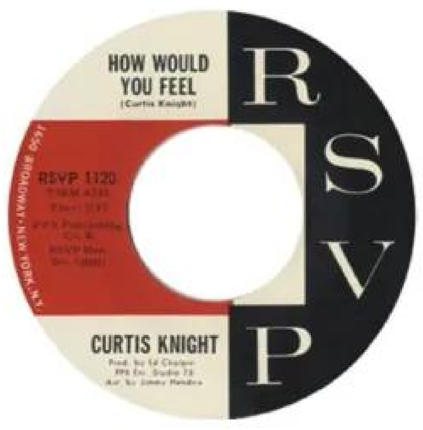
Hendrix returned to Nashville, finding gigs wherever he could. One occasion saw him supporting Cox's new group, The Sandpipers, billed as "Jimmy Hendrix and his magic guitar". Along with Cox, he briefly toured as part of Bob Fisher And The Bonnevilles, before trying his luck in Vancouver as back up for Bobby Taylor. He took part in sporadic recordings for little-known artists like Johnny Jones and Sandra Wright, but couldn't catch a break.

Money was tight, but the thought of failure made him redouble his efforts. Hendrix wrote home to his father around the time: "I still have my guitar and amp and as long as I have that, no fool can keep me from living. Although I don't eat every day, everything's going all right for me. It could be worse than this, but I'm going to keep hustling and scuffling until I get things to happening, like they're supposed to for me."

By early 1964 he'd moved to New York City. Having scooped first prize – a princely $25 – on amateur night at Harlem's famous Apollo Theatre, Hendrix saw his fortunes change. The Isley Brothers invited him to audition. Pitching up at their New Jersey home with everything he owned in a beat-up guitar case, Hendrix duly joined their backing band, the I.B. Specials. He toured with the Isleys all over the US and Canada, during which time he first crossed paths with drummer and future collaborator Buddy Miles, then gigging with Ruby & The Romantics.

Hendrix also joined the Isleys in a New York studio that spring, where they cut the fiery gospel tune, *Testify (Parts I & II)*. He was

> **"People would scream and I thought they were screaming for me. I look over and they're screaming for Jimi!"**
>
> **Little Richard**



allowed to express himself with a series of burning lead riffs, but, back on the road, he felt more inhibited. The group's clean-cut demeanour and regimented stage look didn't sit well with Hendrix's frilly shirts, coloured scarves and loose bracelets.

In May 1964, Hendrix snuck off to play guitar on Don Covay's soulful *Mercy Mercy*. The single rose to No.35 on the Billboard chart, earning him his first hit. He would teach the main riff to guitarist Steve Cropper during a trip to Stax Studios in Memphis that autumn. "That about knocked me to my knees," recalled Cropper, who covered the song with Booker T. & The M.G.'s the following year.

Hendrix was already bored with the Isleys by that time and resolved to quit. He reunited with George Odell, who secured him a spot on Sam Cooke's Super Attractions tour. His trajectory seemed back on the up, only for him to miss the bus one night in Missouri and become stranded in Kansas City.

Odell came to his rescue once again, connecting Hendrix to members of Little Richard's backing band. With his guitar wrapped in a potato sack, Hendrix bought a bus ticket to Atlanta, where The Mighty Hannibal, with whom he'd played for a short while, made the introductions to his new employer. Little Richard's glory days were long gone by then, though he was still a popular live performer. Hendrix took his place in The Crown Jewels, his touring band, and hit the road in early 1965.

A stopover in LA brought Hendrix into contact with singer Rosa Lee Brooks. They briefly became an item, with Brooks also enlisting him to play on her single, *My Diary* (written by Arthur Lee), and b-side, *Utee*. It marked the beginning of a warm friendship between Lee and Hendrix, who became one of Love's biggest supporters.

Back with Little Richard, Hendrix accompanied the rock'n'roll legend in the studio for a searing version of Don Covay's *I Don't Know What You Got (But It's Got Me)*. It's an astonishing vocal performance from Richard, wringing out every drop of anguish. Hendrix told one interviewer that he wanted "to do with my guitar what Little Richard does with his voice."

But life in the band was less praiseworthy. Hendrix claimed that he went weeks without being paid, while Richard cited the guitarist's tardiness and his penchant for trying to upstage him as an ongoing issue. "On the stage he would actually take the show," Richard told VH1's *Legends*. "People would scream and I thought they were screaming for me. I look over and they're screaming for Jimi! So I had to darken the lights."

Hendrix was eventually fired after missing the bus one time too many. He'd seen it coming. "There were always problems," he remembered later. "I wanted to quit."

Hendrix was temporarily reunited with The Isley Brothers in the latter half of 1965. They played a handful of dates and, in August, headed into New York's Atlantic Studios to record an Isleys single, *Move Over And Let*

> **"If I ended up in jail, I knew I wouldn't be able to play guitar."**
> **Jimi Hendrix**

Me Dance/Have You Ever Been Disappointed. But he soon moved on.

Meeting R&B singer Curtis Knight in October '65, in the lobby of the America Hotel in New York, led to a steadier job. Knight brought Hendrix into his backing trio, The Squires, and recorded a 45, *How Would You Feel*, the next day. His tenure with the band lasted until May the following year and included a handful of further recordings, including the instrumentals *Hornet's Nest* and *Knock Yourself Out*, both notable for earning Hendrix his first credits as composer.

The arrangement with Knight wasn't exclusive. Neither were his business deals. Having previously agreed a two-year deal with Sue Records, Hendrix took it upon himself to sign a three-year contract with PPX Enterprises not long after. Not only did it illustrate his naivety in dealing with the music industry, but his involvement with PPX proved damaging. After Hendrix had become a superstar, legal problems ensued with company boss Ed Chalpin, who issued a series of compilations from the guitarist's time with The Squires. "They were nothing but jam sessions, man," commented a peeved Hendrix.

In the meantime, his stretch with Knight was interrupted by touring duties with Joey Dee & The Starliters and, in January 1966, a studio date with Ray Sharpe and the King Curtis Orchestra. As the Squires dissolved, Hendrix cut sides with the group's saxophonist, Lonnie Youngblood, billed as The Icemen. But his main goal was to be out front. "I wanted my own scene, I wanted my own music," he stated. "I was starting to see you could create a whole new world with an electric guitar."

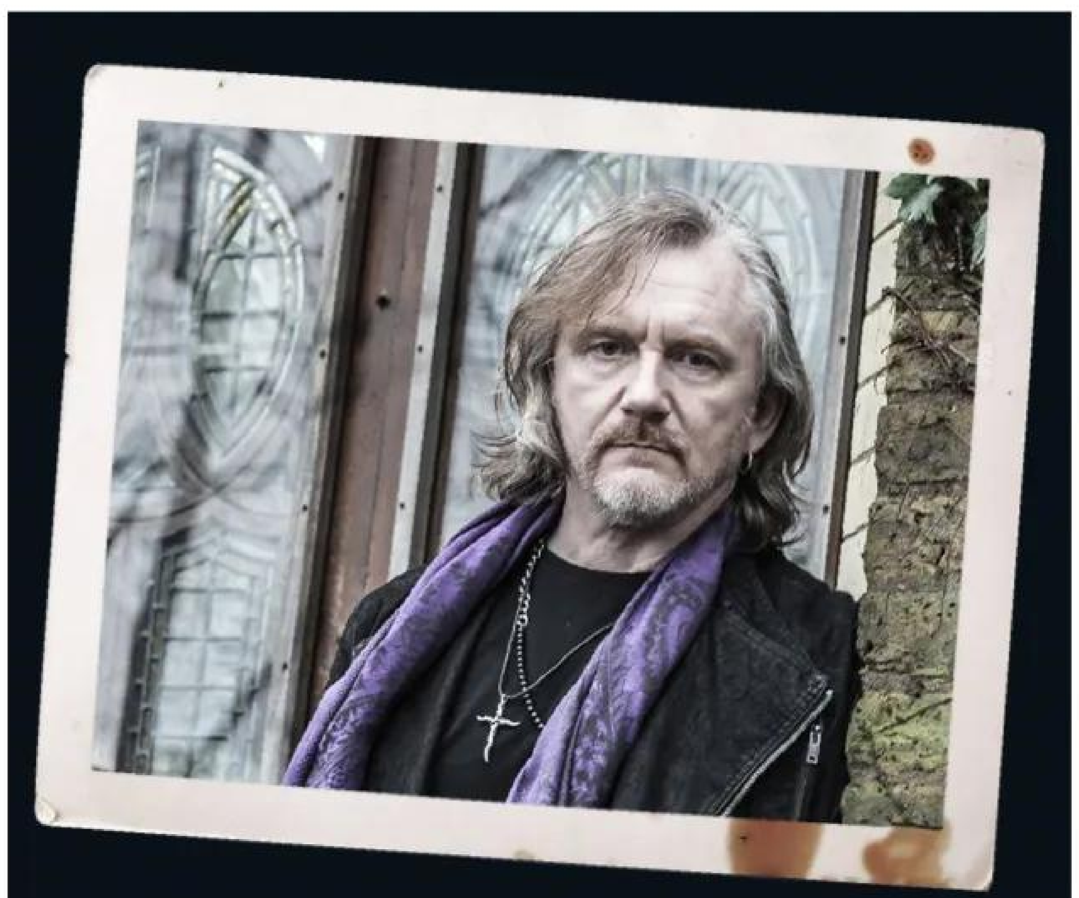
***Vogue* model Linda Keith: the woman who tried to get Hendrix a record deal.**

His solution was to shift over to Greenwich Village and start his own band in the summer of '66: Jimmy James And The Blue Flames. On the strength of his reputation from playing with Curtis Knight, securing a residency at the Café Wha? proved no problem. Word began to build. Among the songs covered by the Blue Flames (whose ranks included future Spirit guitarist Randy California) were two inspired covers that would soon be etched into Hendrix lore: *Hey Joe* and *Wild Thing*.

Vogue model Linda Keith, girlfriend of the Stones' Keith Richards, became a regular at those Village gigs. Convinced of Hendrix's potential, she invited along the likes of Seymour Stein (who'd just founded Sire Productions) and Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham. Bizarrely, neither of them were sufficiently enthused.

Everything changed when Keith bumped into Animals bassist Chas Chandler, then looking to get into production and management. She took him to the Café Wha? one August afternoon and watched as Hendrix launched into *Hey Joe*, at which point "he blew Chas's mind with the first chord." The rest, as we know, is legend.

The style council: a dapper Hendrix (left) with Curtis Knight And The Squires.



LUKE MORLEY OF THUNDER

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"I wasn't aware of Hendrix until he died, bizarrely. It was 1970. I was about ten years old. I was watching the news item and there was a film of him playing with his teeth and smashing it up at Monterey. I said: 'Dad, can I have a guitar, please?' So it's no exaggeration to say that the reason I picked up a guitar was because of Hendrix.

"The next few years, I literally wore out my copy of *Are You Experienced*. I only ever had one guitar lesson at school, and when I told the teacher my favourite guitar player was Hendrix, he said: 'I don't think I can help you.' So I played the records over and over again and tried to copy them.

"The first two albums are still the best for me. *Electric Ladyland* is great too, but it's a very undisciplined, psychedelic, rambling kind of album. But it's got some interesting moments – and possibly the greatest guitar solo of all time in *All Along The Watchtower*. I still don't know how he gets those sounds.

"I'd like to read more about the first six months he was in London. That's the most interesting era. He'd been up and down the chitlin' circuit in the States, and when he exploded in London, it was like an outpouring of all his frustrations. He basically caused this furore among all the go-to people in the late sixties – Clapton, Townshend, Jeff Beck, McCartney. They all turned up to watch him, and he blew a fuse.

"I've never bid on a Hendrix guitar. I'm not that fucking rich… and I'm a clumsy son-of-a-bitch. But a few years ago we were at the Hard Rock Café Museum in London, and they'd got Hendrix's Flying V in there. The curator was a Thunder fan, and he said: 'I don't normally do this,' and he opened the case and let me play it. Strangely enough, they had music on a loop in there, and *Voodoo Child* was playing, so I played along, because obviously I knew it backwards. So there I was, playing *Voodoo Child* on Hendrix's guitar. It was mental. But that guitar was fucking priceless. I was just thinking to myself: 'Don't fucking drop it.'

"How would Hendrix have evolved if he hadn't died? I think he'd have been interested in digital technology, synthesisers, all that stuff. Whether or not it would have turned into something fantastic, who knows? The most fascinating thing is that it's fifty years since he died, and still, to this day, every lead guitar player I hear, I'll go: 'Oh, bit of Hendrix in there, lovely.' The fact that he burned so brightly for such a brief time just adds to his legend – dying early is very good for business!"

AS TOLD TO HENRY YATES

HEAR MY TRAIN A COMIN'

When **Jimi Hendrix** landed in London for the first time, the rock world tilted on its axis and in a blinding psychedelic flash he shot from unknown to superstar and changed everything.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

In September 1966, 23-year-old Jimi Hendrix hit London like a one-man invading army, going from unknown American sideman to guitar-slinging supernova in four months.

Why did Hendrix have to move to England to find fame and fortune? Well, in the mid-60s America simply wasn't swinging enough to get on his wavelength, or what he later described as the "free feeling – a mixture of rock, freak-out, blues and rave music". If you need proof, who better to provide it than Les Paul, inventor of the electric guitar and multitrack recording, the two things that helped Hendrix become a star.

"I came across Jimi in 1965 one afternoon at a roadhouse in New Jersey called the Allegro," the late genius revealed in 2007. "I was on my way into the city to drop off some tapes at Columbia Records. The club was pretty empty. Jimi was auditioning. He was playing a Les Paul Black Beauty left-handed. Man, he was all over that thing! At the time, I was getting into artist management, so I stayed curious about new acts. I thought, 'I'll swing back on my way home from New York and meet this guy.' When I got to the Allegro an hour later, Jimi was gone. I asked the bartender: 'Where is that guitarist? Did he get the gig?' And he said: 'Are you kidding? We threw him out. He was too loud!' 'What was his name?' 'I didn't get it.' I looked in every joint in Jersey for the guy, only knowing he was tall, with bushy hair and played lefty. Never found him. Two years later, I see him on the cover of an album and he's a big smash over in England."

Of course, Hendrix had more going on than that failed bar audition suggests. He'd been a regular on the chitlin' circuit for three years, playing with King Curtis, Little Richard, the Isley Brothers – names that then had more cachet in Britain than in their home country, America. He'd been on stage at the famed Apollo in New York. He'd guested on various TV music shows. "I had all these ideas and sounds in my brain, and playing this 'other people's music' all the time was hurting me," Hendrix said. But the jump from sideman to frontman can be an Atlantic-sized crossing. Sometimes it helps to have a champion in your corner.

Hendrix found his in 1966 with Chas Chandler. The former bassist with The Animals was making his own jump, from musician to manager. After being wowed by Hendrix's performance at Cafe Wha? in Greenwich Village – which included playing the guitar with his teeth and behind his head – Chandler signed his first client.

The Pan Am flight that brought Hendrix on his first ever trip to Britain arrived at Heathrow on the morning of Saturday, September 24. Although Chandler's plan was for Jimi to live in London while he put a band together for him, the two had to be creative at customs. Britain had laws restricting foreigners coming for employment. A member of The Animals' road crew took Jimi's guitar through separately. Then a press agent friend of Chandler's, Tony Garland, came to sort out Hendrix's work permit. "I had to invent a story that Jimi was this famous singer who'd come to collect his royalties," Garland said. "Otherwise they weren't going to let him in." Finally, Hendrix was cleared, but with only a one-week visa.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"He just looked unusual – stunning, really."

Girlfriend Kathy Etchingham

That evening, Chandler took Hendrix to the Scotch Of St James club. One of the people at the club that night was 20-year-old Kathy Etchingham, a hairdresser and part-time DJ who'd dated Keith Moon and Brian Jones. "There were stairs winding down to the basement, and everybody was leaning over the banisters to listen to this guy sitting in the corner of the club playing," Etchingham recalled. "They were enthralled."

Later, Etchingham was introduced to Jimi. "He just looked unusual – stunning, really. He was fresh and he had a very soft sort of American accent."

The flirtatious Hendrix asked her to go home with him. And there began a two-year romance – but not before she saved his life. Jet-lagged and unacquainted with traffic being on the left ⊳

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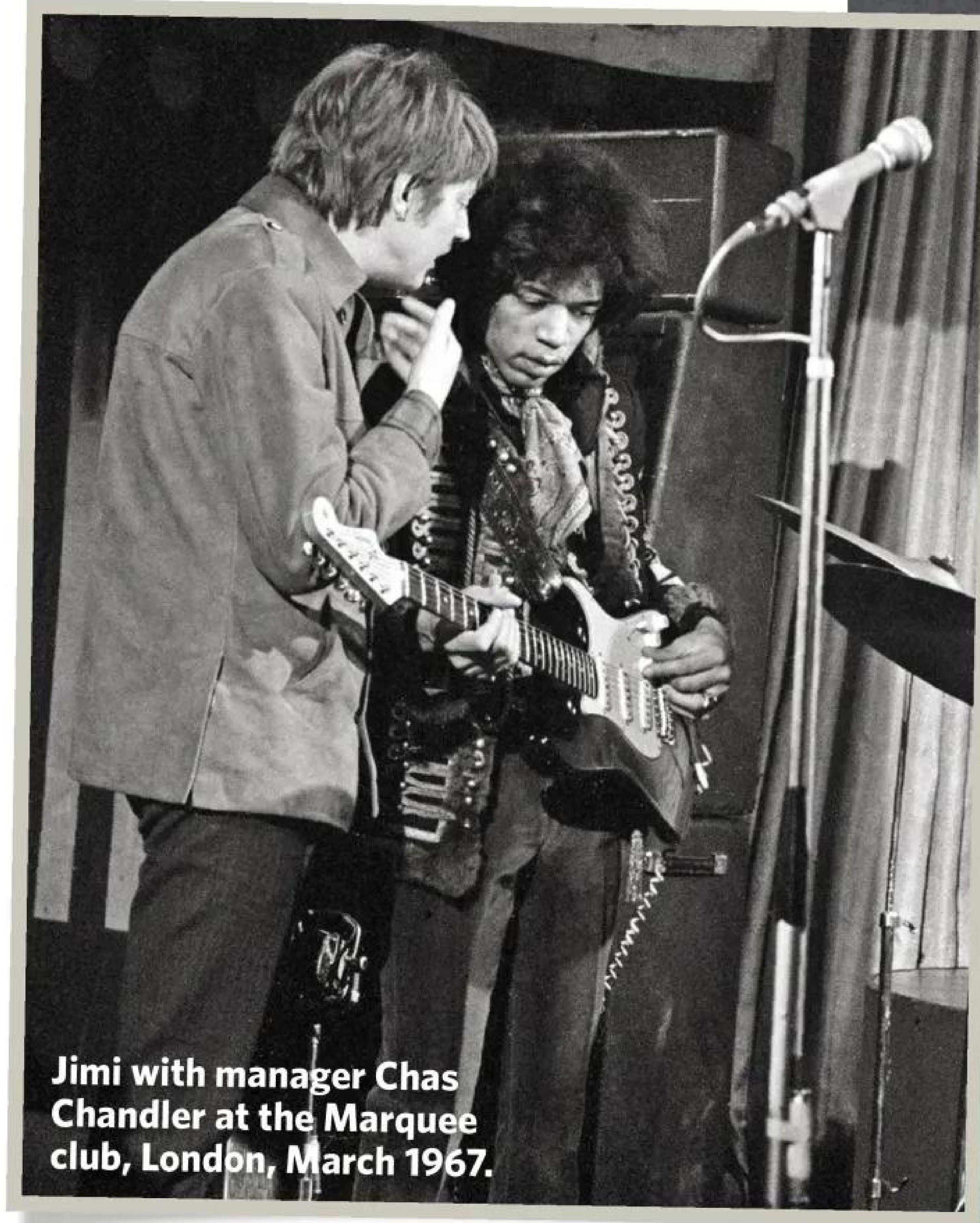

Jimi with manager Chas Chandler at the Marquee club, London, March 1967.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

"I went away from seeing Jimi thinking: 'I better think of something else to do.'"

Jeff Beck

The Jimi Hendrix Experience: drummer Mitch Mitchell, Jimi and bass player Noel Redding.

in Britain, Jimi stepped right into the path of a speeding cab outside the club. Etchingham yanked him back to the kerb just in time.

London in late '66 embodied the 'Swinging' tag it had acquired: The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* and The Who's *I'm A Boy* were topping the singles chart; *Blow-Up* and *Georgy Girl* were pushing the envelope in cinemas; Emma Peel and John Steed were making TV crime-fighting look glamorous; the club scene was alive at Blaises and the Bag O' Nails; dress hemlines were climbing upwards; and flared trousers and velvet jackets were blooming in dayglo colours in Carnaby Street and the King's Road.

Although he would soon indulge in the fashion scene, especially the vintage military jackets that were the rage, Hendrix had more immediate goals: to put together a group, and to get a work permit. His idea for a band was informed by past experience. He wanted nine pieces, with piano, horns and backing singers. But Chandler knew that a small combo would keep the spotlight where it needed to be.

The group to back Hendrix, The Experience (named by Animals manager Michael Jeffery) – not a nine-piece, just a rhythm section – was put together in just two days, October 4-5. It comprised Noel Redding, a guitarist who was asked to switch to bass, and Mitch Mitchell, a jazzbo drummer. His inclusion was literally the result of a toss-up, Chandler flipping a coin to decide between Mitchell and Aynsley Dunbar. Redding's first impression of Hendrix was: "Funny overcoat and weird shoes! The first day, we went through three songs," he said. "Afterwards I went down the pub with Hendrix, and he was asking me about English music and I was asking him about American music. We had a nice chat and he said: 'Would you like to join my group?' I said: 'Give us the old train fare and I'll come back tomorrow.' Within two days I was in."

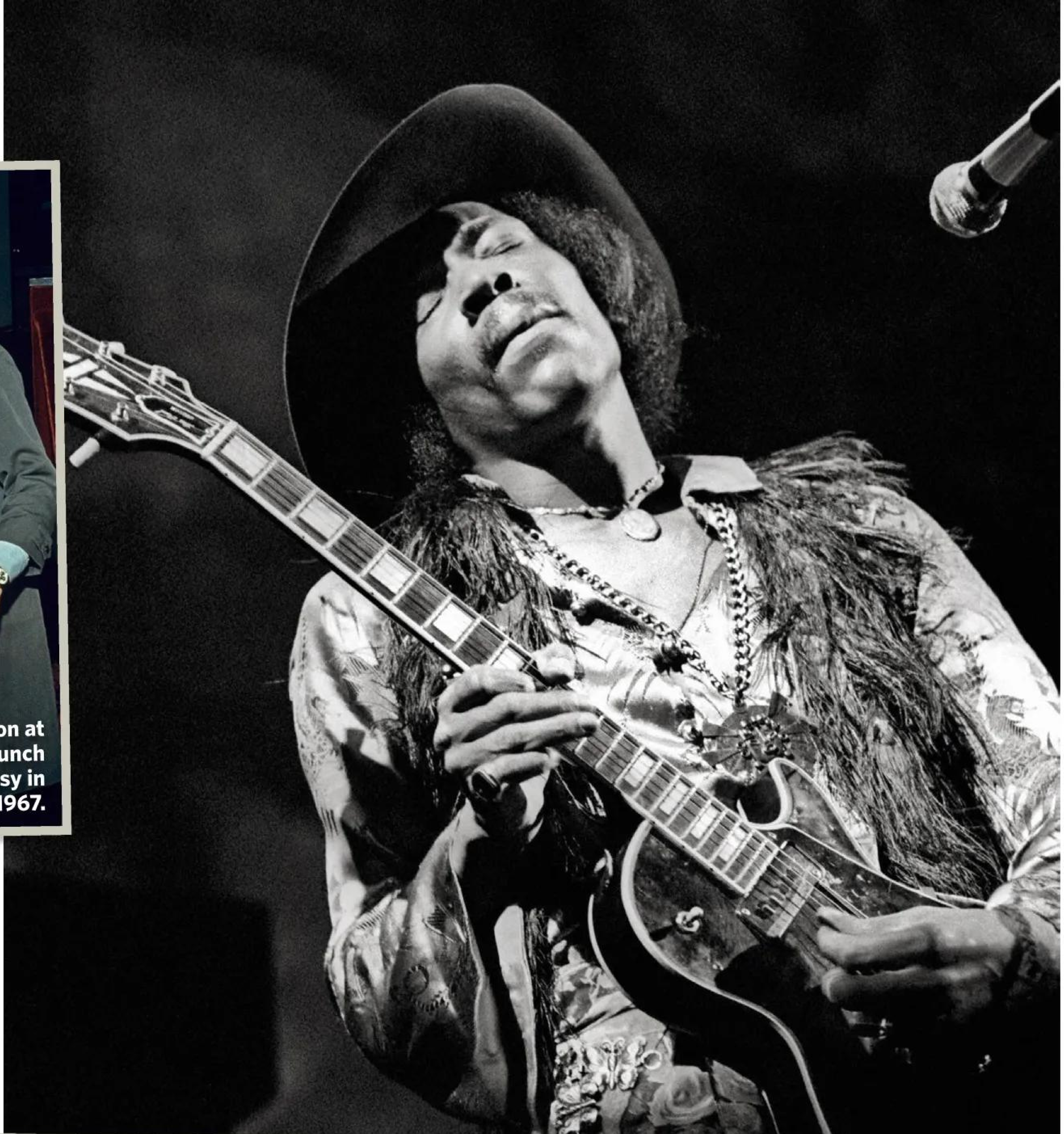
Mitch Mitchell remembered: "There was Noel, and he'd never played a bass in his life. Hendrix arrived in a Humphrey Bogart raincoat, with his Stratocaster and two little Burns amps. They had already auditioned something like thirty drummers. We just played over various rhythms and that was that. Hendrix said: 'Okay, see you around.' Chas said there was a gig in Paris the next week with [French pop sensation] Johnny Hallyday and asked if we fancied doing it. So we said okay and spent three days rehearsing, then off we went. And that was how it started. There was complete freedom in what we played. It was like escaping from jail."

Jimi and girlfriend Kathy Etchingham, whom he met on his first night out in London.

That same week, Chandler took Hendrix to see Cream at the Polytechnic of Central London. Jimi was excited to meet Eric Clapton, one of his favourite guitarists. But Chandler had more in mind. During a break, he called Clapton to the front of the stage to ask if Jimi could jam with Cream. It was an unusual request for the trio, and they didn't know what to say. Finally, Jack Bruce shrugged and said: "I guess he can plug into my bass amp." When Jimi played a blazing version of Howlin' Wolf's *Killing Floor* with them, jaws dropped – including that of Clapton, then considered to be the hottest guitarist in Britain. Although early on Clapton was critical of Jimi's "sexual thing" of tonguing the guitar and rubbing

REX x2, ALAMY

Jimi and Eric Clapton at the Track Records launch party at the Speakeasy in London, March 16, 1967.



Jimi with a Les Paul, designed by the man whose name it bears and who was an early admirer of Hendrix's playing.

it across his crotch, he said he was "fantastically talented and a beautiful player".

He wasn't the only guitarist taking note. Jeff Beck said: "It was like a bomb being blown up in the right place. I went away from seeing Jimi thinking: 'I better think of something else to do.' I followed him around a bit – and he'd heard of me, which I couldn't believe. He said: 'What's the lick you play on [The Yardbirds'] *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago*? I swiped that.' I thought: 'Wait a minute. We can talk music now. It's not like he's some immovable force.'"

The Jimi Hendrix Experience doing *Purple Haze* on Top Of The Pops, March '67.

Pete Townshend said: "I never had any sense that I could ever come close. I remember feeling quite sorry for Eric, who thought that he might actually be able to emulate Jimi. I also felt sorry that he should think that he needed to. Because Eric was wonderful anyway. Once – I think it was at a gig Jimi played at the Scotch Of St James – Eric and I found ourselves holding each other's hands. You know, what we were watching was so profoundly powerful. The electric guitar had always been dangerous, it had always been able to evoke anger. Jimi made it beautiful and made it okay to make it beautiful."

After their brief tour of France supporting Hallyday, Hendrix and The Experience returned to play some shows in England. And the music papers were taking notice. "Great stage presence and exceptional guitar technique," said *Melody Maker*. *NME* said: "A one-man guitar explosion. What he does to a guitar could get him arrested for assault."

In between shows, Hendrix moved in with his new girlfriend Kathy Etchingham. Despite their psychedelic fashion sense and vampire hours, at home they would come to prefer a surprisingly domestic life, drinking tea, watching *Coronation Street* (Jimi loved Ena Sharples) and keeping a tidy flat. "He was a bit of a clean freak," Etchingham said. "I think because he was in the army, and they must've taught him to get up, make the bed, make sure everything's neat."

GETTY x2; REX

Being the toast of the club scene and having the attention and respect of England's top guitarists was one thing. But could Hendrix sell records? His first single was *Hey Joe*, a cover of a murder ballad written in 1962 by Billy Roberts. When Chandler heard Jimi play it at Cafe Wha?, he knew it could be a hit. Jimi had learned the tune from folkie Tim Rose, but it had already been covered by The Leaves, Love and The Standells.

"The electric guitar had been able to evoke anger. Jimi made it beautiful and made it okay to make it beautiful."

Pete Townshend

Jimi's version was definitive. Punctuating the lyrics with piercing guitar commentary, he sounded like he was the desperado on the run *'down Mexico way'*. Released on December 16, the same day The Experience appeared on TV pop show *Ready, Steady, Go!*, the song became a hit, peaking at No.4. Admittedly, there was a bit of goosing from management, who paid kids to buy up the single in the shops. But from a distance, what's more significant than this solid debut is that Chandler encouraged Hendrix to write a song for the B-side. In an afternoon, he came up with *Stone Free*, which began a burst of songwriting creativity.

Hendrix finished off 1966 with an appearance on *Top Of The Pops* and a New Year's Eve gig at Hillside Social Club in Kent. As eventful as his first four months had been, 1967 would be the watershed year for the Jimi Hendrix Experience. *Purple Haze, The Wind Cries Mary, Foxy Lady,* Monterey, The Fillmore, *Are You Experienced* and *Axis: Bold As Love*… all that and much more was just ahead for the funky American expat.

As Hendrix told *Melody Maker* in early 1967: "I didn't have roots in the States that would hang me up. It don't matter which bit of the world I'm in as long as I'm living and putting things down. With The Experience, we're trying to create: our own music, personal sound and our own personal being… and I'm gonna make certain I don't fluff it all up."

Can you see me?

The Jimi Hendrix Experience's debut album, *Are You Experienced*, was pieced together over six frantic months in London. The result would launch its creator on the path to superstardom.

Words: **David Sinclair**

Are You Experienced is one of the great albums of all time. Over the course of the original UK version's 11 songs, as well as the three singles and B-sides which preceded it, Jimi Hendrix – the man whose vision and talent both powered it and set it apart from everything else – integrated and manipulated guitar chords, riffs, solos and a myriad of effects in ways that revolutionised the sound, style and substance of popular music.

Less fulsomely acknowledged are Hendrix's skills as a singer and songwriter, who applied a ready wit and poetic imagination to words, melodies, and the rhythmic components of his compositions that was every bit as artful as his guitar playing. Indeed nowadays, with the benefit of 50 plus years to study and digest the full panoply of Hendrix's technical skills, there are plenty of guitarists who are able to emulate his playing style, often with eerie accuracy. But no one has yet been able to replicate the unique personality of his vocal style or to recreate the sly humour and cinematic resonance of his lyrics.

Often overlooked altogether is the unique chemistry between Hendrix and the two other musicians who created this incredible album: drummer Mitch Mitchell and bass player Noel Redding. In the case of Hendrix and Mitchell, *Are You Experienced* introduced to the world a musical symbiosis of a quite exceptional nature as evidenced on tracks including

SHUTTERSTOCK

Manic Depression, Love Or Confusion, I Don't Live Today and others. The guitarist and drummer maintained a musical relationship of extraordinary creativity and empathy until Hendrix's death in London, four years later, after which Mitchell never held down a serious gig again. Brothers in arms, indeed.

Are You Experienced was the moment it all kicked off, and some commentators have suggested it was rock's equivalent of the Big Bang – an explosion of ideas and innovations that brought a new world of musical possibilities instantly into existence. Maybe so. But the true miracle of *Are You Experienced* is that it ever got written and recorded at all.

> **"They sat up night after night in Chas Chandler's apartment, reading science fiction books and comics."**
>
> **engineer Eddie Kramer**

Cobbled together in short bursts of studio time snatched in gaps between a punishing schedule of travelling, gigs, TV appearances and radio sessions, the album was a kaleidoscopic collection of ideas developed and performances captured on the hoof. The songs were hastily written by Hendrix for the most part in the London flat he shared with manager and producer Chas Chandler, but often scrawled on scraps of paper at odd moments backstage or on the road. They were recorded on basic 4-track tape, in mono, at various studios – De Lane Lea, CBS, Olympic - subject to availability and what the meagre budget at their disposal would run to. And they were performed with no proper rehearsals, let alone demos done beforehand to prepare Mitchell and Redding or indeed Hendrix himself.

So little thought had gone into the planning of the album at the outset, that Hendrix was only galvanised into action as a songwriter when he was faced with the immediate need to record a B-side for the first single, *Hey Joe*, an obscure cover of an old blues number with opaque origins. Hendrix's initial suggestion was to record a version of the soul standard *Land Of 1,000 Dances*, which had just been a hit in America for Wilson Pickett.

"I said absolutely no way," Chandler recalled. "I told him that he was going to sit down that night and write a new song. That's how Stone Free came about, the first Experience song he ever wrote." ▷

Hendrix and Chas Chandler: "I told Jimi he was going to sit down and write a song. That's how *Stone Free* came about."

GETTY X2

The importance of Chas Chandler's role in the making of *Are You Experienced* is second only to that of Hendrix himself. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the album would have been made at all without Chandler's input, and certainly not to anything like the standard that it was. Not only did he put Hendrix, Mitchell and Redding together in the first place, secure them a deal with the newly-formed Track Records, manage the day-to-day affairs of the group and produce the album. He was also deeply involved with the creative process on all levels.

Eddie Kramer, who engineered the recordings at Olympic Studio, recalled how Chandler nurtured Hendrix's talent.

"They sat up night after night in Chas's apartment," Kramer remembered. "They would play these wonderful board games. They would read science fiction books and science fiction comics, and a lot of that was Chas's influence on Jimi and Jimi just sort of absorbing it all and becoming a great songwriter."

Among Chandler's books was *Earth Abides*, a celebrated post-apocalyptic novel by George R Stewart, which influenced the doomy, end-of-the-world, soundscape *3rd Stone From The Sun*. Another story, *Night Of Light*, by Philip Jose Farmer, which Hendrix read at this time, used the phrase "purple haze" to describe the disorientating visual effect of sunspot activity on a planet called Dante's Joy.

Chandler's experience as the bass player in the Animals gave him knowledge that was invaluable on every level. He was brisk and business-like in the studio, reining in any tendency to excess. But he was also sympathetic and switched on to the creative impulse, and constantly encouraged the trio to explore the sonic possibilities of the studio and express themselves as musicians without fear. In particular, his knowledge of bass playing was invaluable to Redding who, having switched from guitar, was a novice on the instrument.

"Chas would come out into the studio to show me various bass techniques," Redding said. "The bass was still new to me and I was taking in everything I could. Chas told me about little things like different scales and what was classified as a walking bass line, which were simple but very effective."

At the outset, the whole project was precariously balanced, to say the least, with Chandler desperately trying to keep the finances afloat while juggling schedules and maintaining the confidence of various backers. On December 13 he took the band into CBS studio in New Bond Street, an upgrade from De Lane Lea studios in Dean Street, where they had recorded Hey Joe and Stone Free. It was still three days before the release of that first single, and although he had done a deal with Track Records, the new label being set up by Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp – the details of which had been hashed out on the back of beer mat at the Scotch of St James nightclub - Chandler was totally strapped for cash.

The Experience spent two days at CBS recording a backing track for *Foxy Lady*, and laying the foundations of *Red House, Can You See Me, Love Or Confusion* and *3rd Stone From The Sun*. The facilities were great but the session ended in a bitter row. The studio manager would not allow Chandler to book any more time – or even take away the tapes he had recorded – until he had paid the bill for the time already used in the studio. Chandler was unwilling (and most likely unable) to do so. It was only some time later, having returned to De Lane Lea studios, that the producer was forced to pay the bill at CBS in order to get hold of the tapes so that they could carry on working on the tracks they had started recording there.

"We had endless complaints from the neighbours. We had to go round and close all the vents and windows."

studio engineer George Chkiantz

One of the key elements that made Are You Experienced a revolutionary album was the range of new sounds and sonic textures that the album incorporated. There had been one or two groundbreaking recordings of this sort before, notably Pete Townshend's use of feedback and distortion in the Who's 1965 hit *Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere*, and Jeff Beck's outlandish feedback-drenched solo in the Yardbirds 1966 hit *Shapes of Things*. But Hendrix took these "extreme" elements and incorporated them into the very fabric of *Are You Experienced*. From the opening bars of *Foxy Lady* on Track 1 of the UK album, with the hammered on trill, building into a siren call that washes into the sine-wave riff that holds the song together, right up until the final crunching, clanging, careening, backward-taped, grunge fade-out of the title track at the end of Side 2, *Are You Experienced* reinvented the sonic palette of rock music.

One of the key elements in getting these otherworldly sounds was Hendrix's use of heavily-cranked Marshall amps and 4 x 12 speaker cabinets. Engineers at the various studios could not believe how loud Hendrix played. "We had endless complaints from the neighbours," recalled George Chkiantz, a staff engineer at Olympic, where seven or eight layers of professional soundproofing were not enough to contain the noise. "We had to go round and close all the doors and vents and windows. I used to walk around outside of the studio to see how bad it was." The volume enabled Hendrix to create and mutate various forms of sustain and feedback, but also gave him access to a full-blooded, "driven" guitar sound ▷

GETTY X3

Noel Redding (left) and Mitch Mitchell (above): brothers in arms.

that didn't exist in any "pre-select" mode at lower volume levels, as is routinely provided by modern amps.

The added secret weapon in the sound effects department was an electrical engineer, inventor and guitarist called Roger Mayer, whom Hendrix met at a gig at the Bag O'Nails club in Soho. Mayer showed Hendrix a device he had invented called an Octavia which combined the effects of an octave divider and a fuzz pedal. Hendrix used the device, most notably on the second single *Purple Haze*, which marked the beginning of a long and fruitful working relationship with Mayer. Other gadgets of his included a modified fuzzbox, known as Fuzzfaces and a customised treble booster. "Hendrix had what seemed like a zillion fuzzboxes and he would chain them together," Chkiantz recalled. "There was a lot of magic leads going on. The whole system was really quite an unstable one."

Another gadget in its infancy was a hand-driven wah-wah – a precursor of the now ubiquitous pedal-operated device – which Hendrix deployed on *I Don't Live Today* to produce an effect that was redolent of a muted trumpet.

All of this would have been so much rattle and hum were it not for Hendrix's supreme fluency as a player and unique vision as a songwriter. While some of his spacier, psychedelic flights of fancy derived from his love of science fiction and the gathering counter-cultural movement that was about to blossom into the 1967 Summer of Love, there was a side of Hendrix's writing that derived from an early life of hardship and deprivation.

His mother was 17 when he was born and was initially unable to care for him. His father was away in the military, and Hendrix was pushed from pillar to post most of his young life. A bright, sensitive, artistic child, who grew up to be a swashbuckling star, he nevertheless carried within him a residue of hurt and anger which he tapped into on songs such as *Manic Depression* and *I Don't Live Today* with stunning results.

For all his devil-may-care persona when placed on stage or in front of a TV camera, Hendrix was famously shy and lacking confidence in his ability as a singer in the early stages of recording *Are You Experienced*. He would demand that the lights be turned off in the studio so that he could do his vocal takes unobserved. And whereas his guitar parts were recorded with breathtaking speed and accuracy, it took a lot more work and effort to get his vocals right.

But he had a tremendously expressive way of putting a lyric across. From the wistful romanticism of *The Wind Cries Mary* and *May This Be Love* to the freewheeling soul-man strut of *Fire* and the priapic blues holler of *Red House*, he had it all covered. Also, he was authentic in a way which his UK contemporaries could only dream about - a black American who had played on the road and in the studio with original R&B legends such as Little Richard, no less. As biographer Charles Shaar Murray put it: "Hendrix was everything which the Townshends and Mayalls and Jaggers and Claptons had only pretended to be."

In keeping with the spirit in which the entire album had been conceived and made, there was a mad, last-minute scramble to get everything completed before the deadline for release of *Are You Experienced*. Chandler finished mixing and sequencing the tracks at 3am on April 25. A few hours later, he was in the cutting room making a test lacquer of the disc which he then took to a playback at 11am with the admirably-named Horst Schmaltze, head of A&R at Polydor.

"This is the greatest thing I've ever heard," Schmaltze declared when it had finished. Seventeen days later, the album was in the shops.

The impact of *Are You Experienced* was profound, immediate and enduring. It quickly rose to No.2

London calling: Hendrix onstage at the legendary Marquee Club in March 1967.

in the UK album chart, where it had the misfortune to find itself lodged behind *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The Beatles' magnum opus was still at No.1 on Christmas day, by which time *Are You Experienced* was well on the way to selling its first million copies worldwide, but had inevitably slipped down the weekly rankings. In America, where the album was released on August 23, 1967 with a rejigged track listing and different artwork (incorporating a misspelling of *Foxy Lady* as "Foxey Lady"), the album peaked at No.5 and remained on the Billboard album chart for just over two years.

Because of its guitar virtuoso leanings and the extreme volume at which the album was recorded, it is regarded, along with *Fresh Cream*, as one of the prototype heavy metal albums. Its variety of moods, tempos and musical textures makes it an unlikely candidate for such an honour, but there can be no doubt that *Are You Experienced* was a formative influence on the sound and style of subsequent debut albums by Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin among many others. No surprise that it has subsequently been a fixture on many 'greatest albums' list compiled by magazines such as *Classic Rock* and *Rolling Stone*.

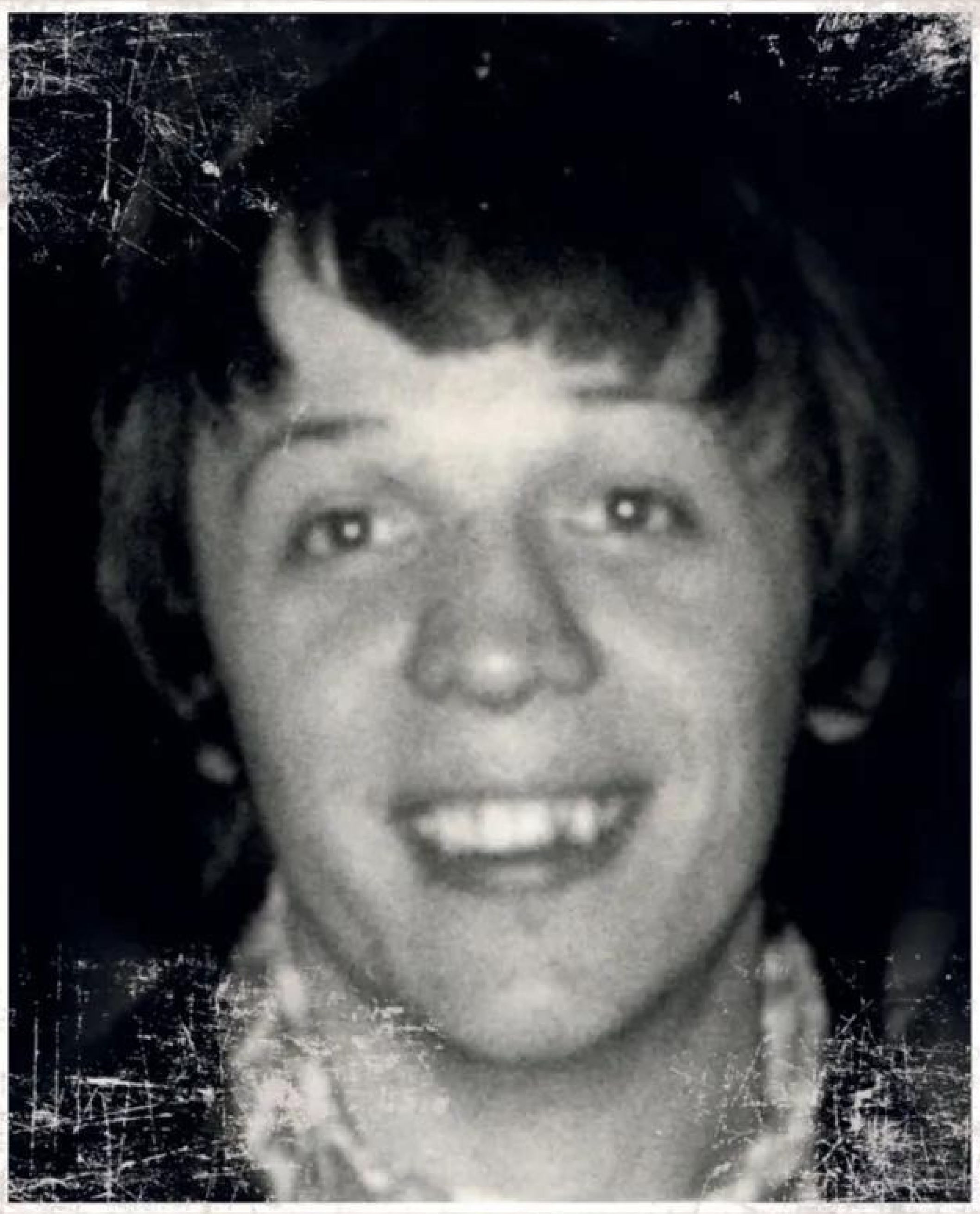
"Hendrix had a zillion fuzzboxes chained together. The whole system was quite an unstable one."

George Chkiantz

Are You Experienced was the opening gambit by the most stellar guitar hero the world has ever known. It provided a blueprint for a line of Hendrix disciples stretching from Robin Trower and Stevie Ray Vaughan through to John Mayer who famously declared "Who I am as a guitarist is defined by my failure to become Jimi Hendrix". And not only guitarists. Stewart Copeland of the Police named Are You Experienced as his favourite drum album of all time and others including Matt Sorum of Guns 'N Roses and Roger Taylor of Queen have acknowledged the formative influence of the album.

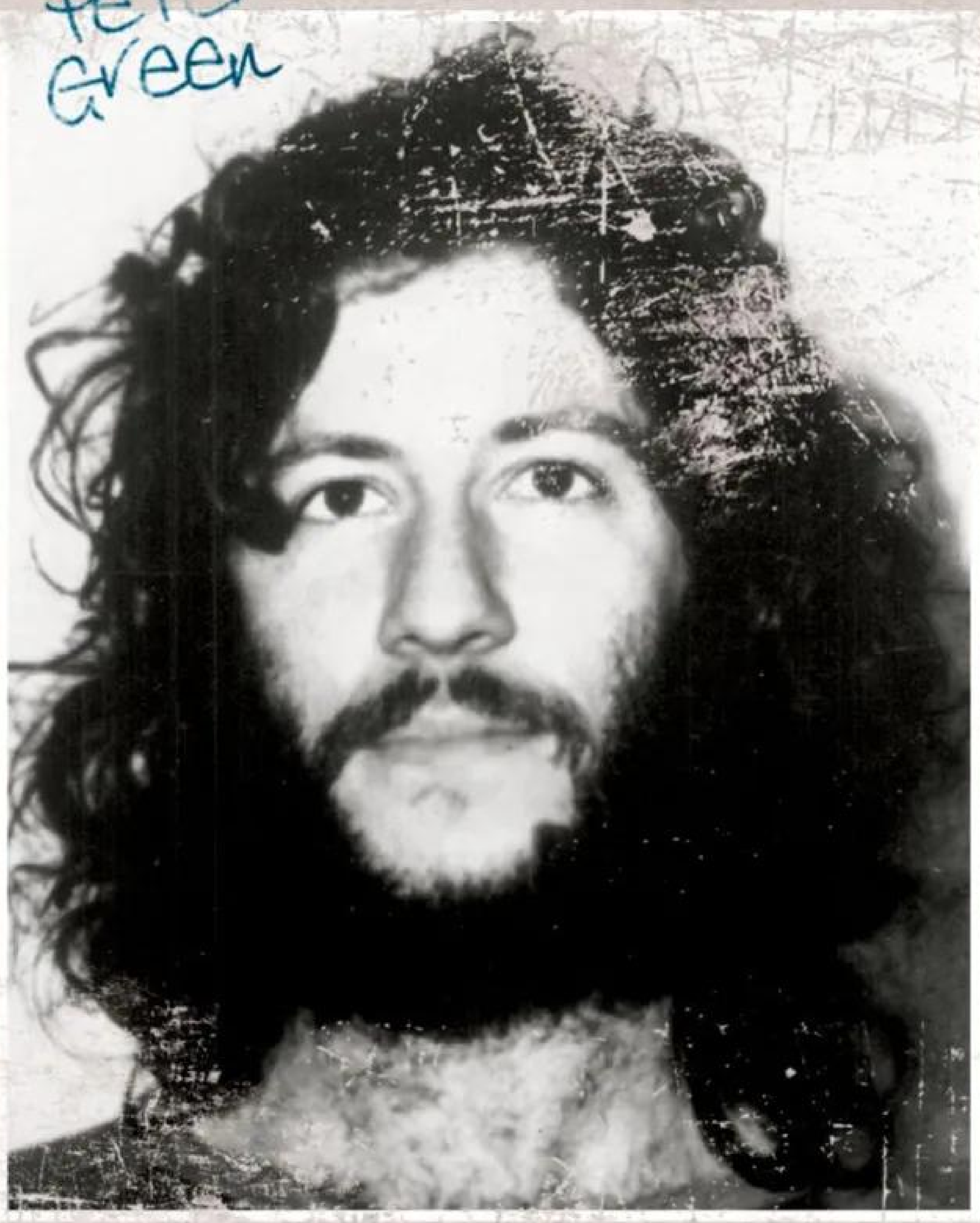
Prince always rejected comparisons with Hendrix, despite the uncanny similarities in their all-encompassing range of talents, but his cover of *Red House* (renamed Purple House) spoke volumes about the influence of *Are You Experienced* on his music. Many other stars have covered songs from the album, notably ZZ Top (*Foxy Lady*), Sting (*The Wind Cries Mary*), John Lee Hooker (*Red House*) and Eric Gales (*May This Be Love*) to name a few.

Have you ever been Experienced? Well, they have… along with musicians and music fans from all corners and genres who continue to be switched on by this most inspiring and indelible collection of songs and sounds.

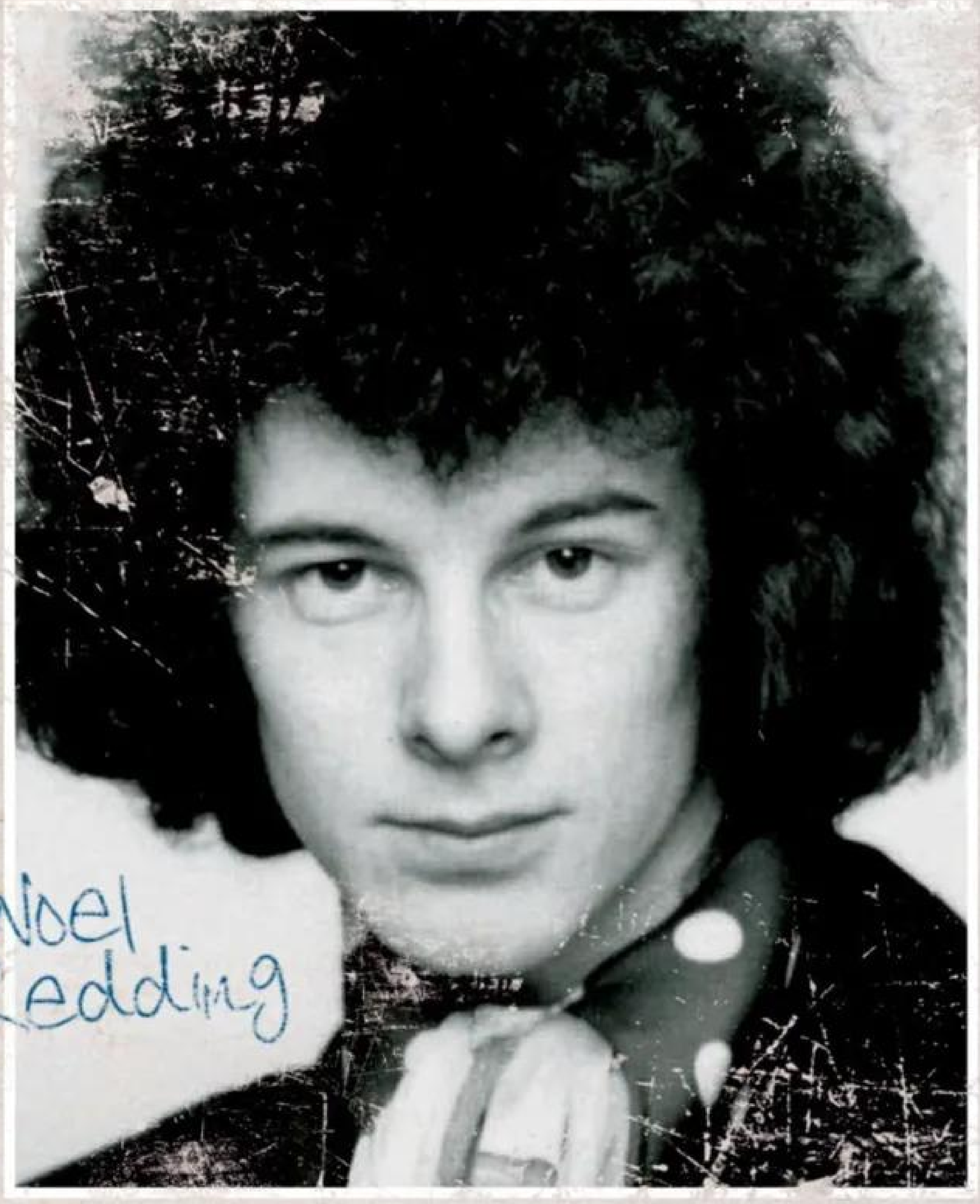


Robin Trower

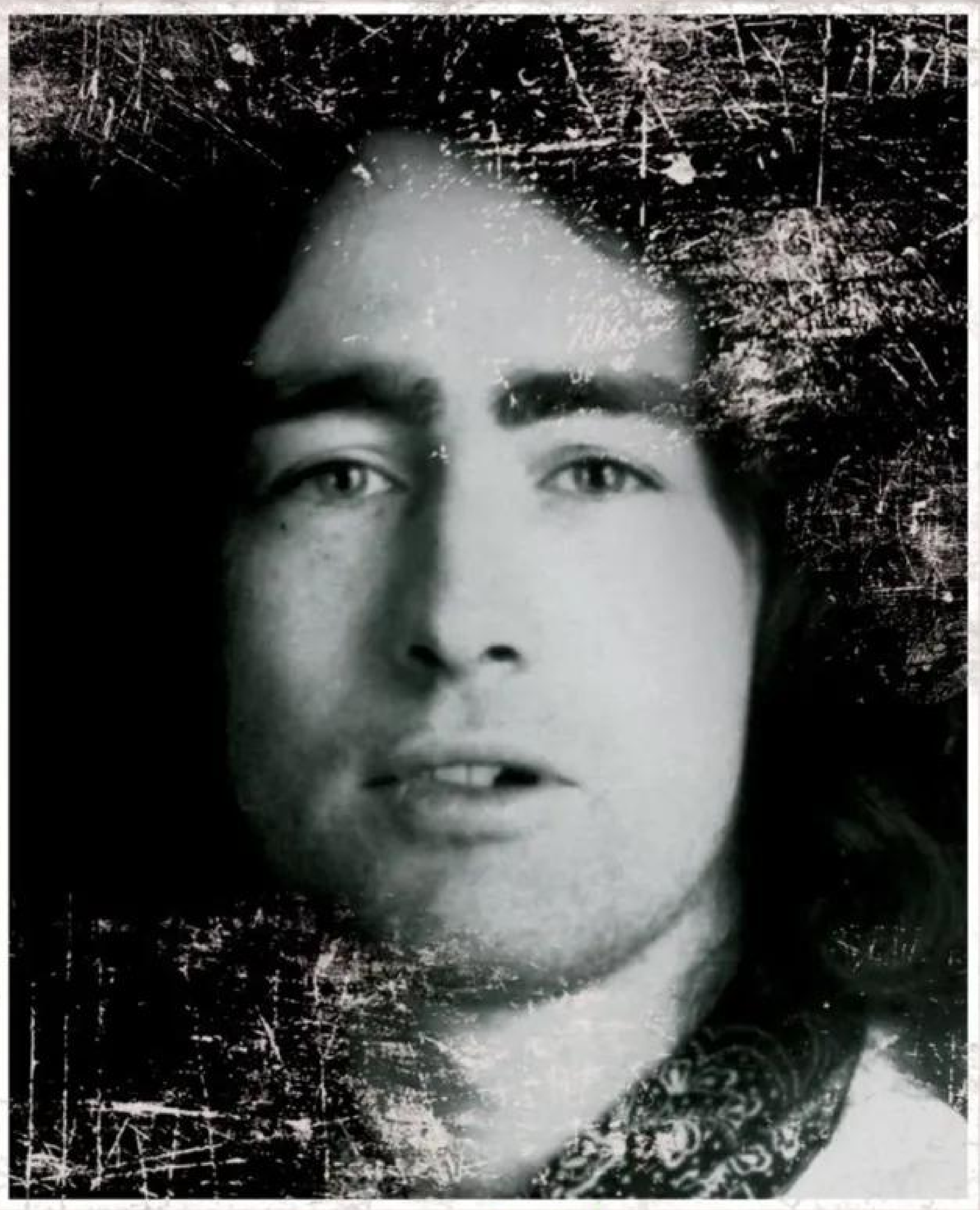
Peter Green



Mick Taylor



Noel Redding

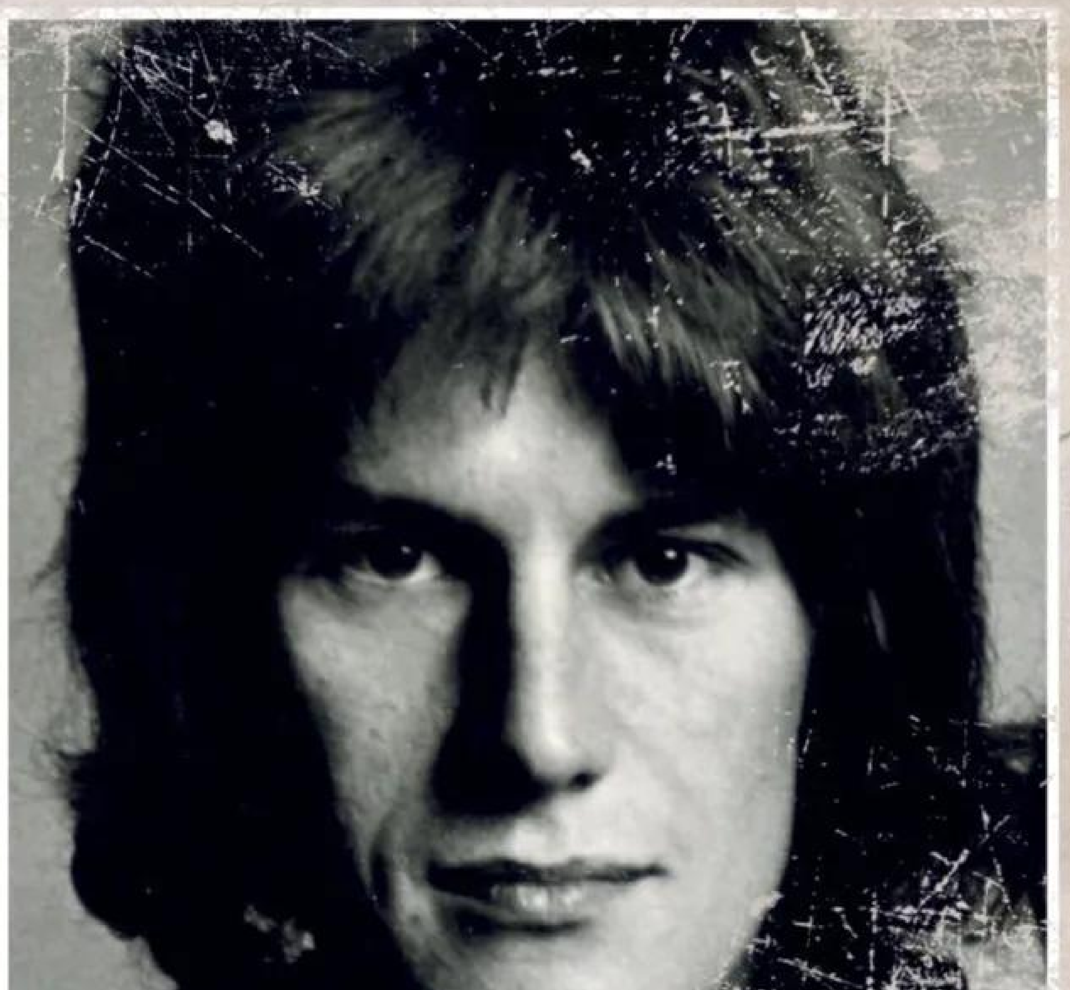


Paul Rodgers

Jimmy Page

Robert Plant

Jim Marshall



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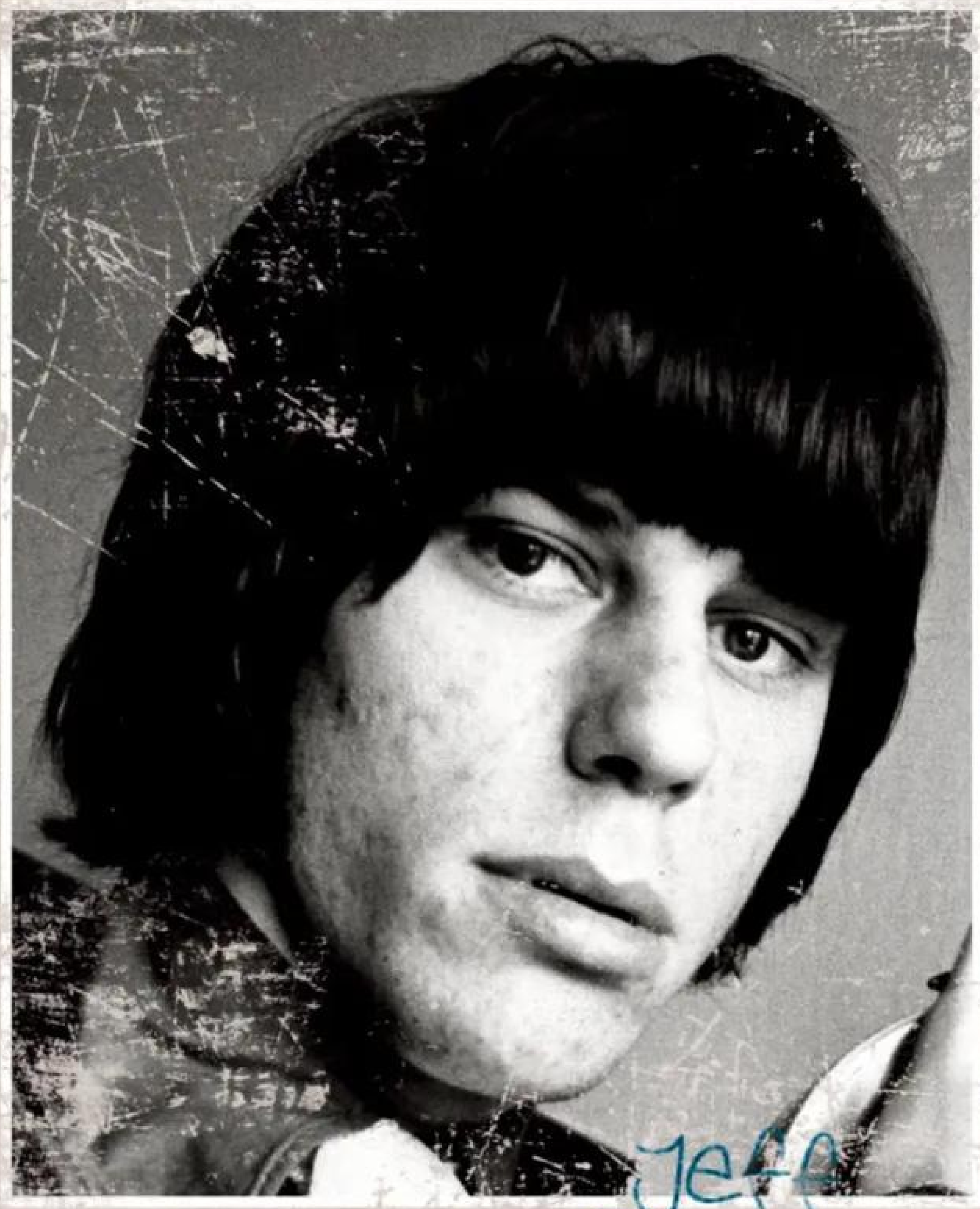
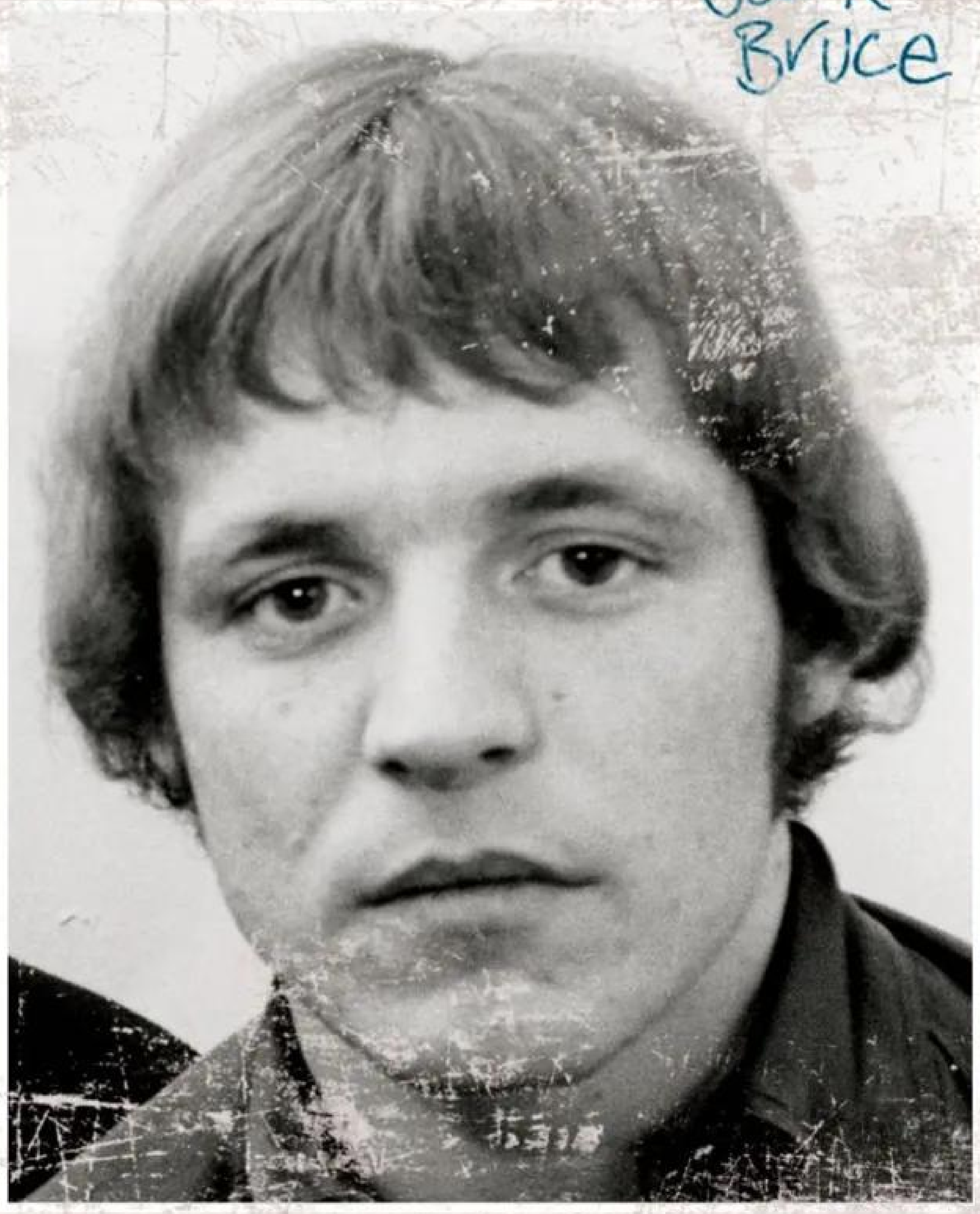
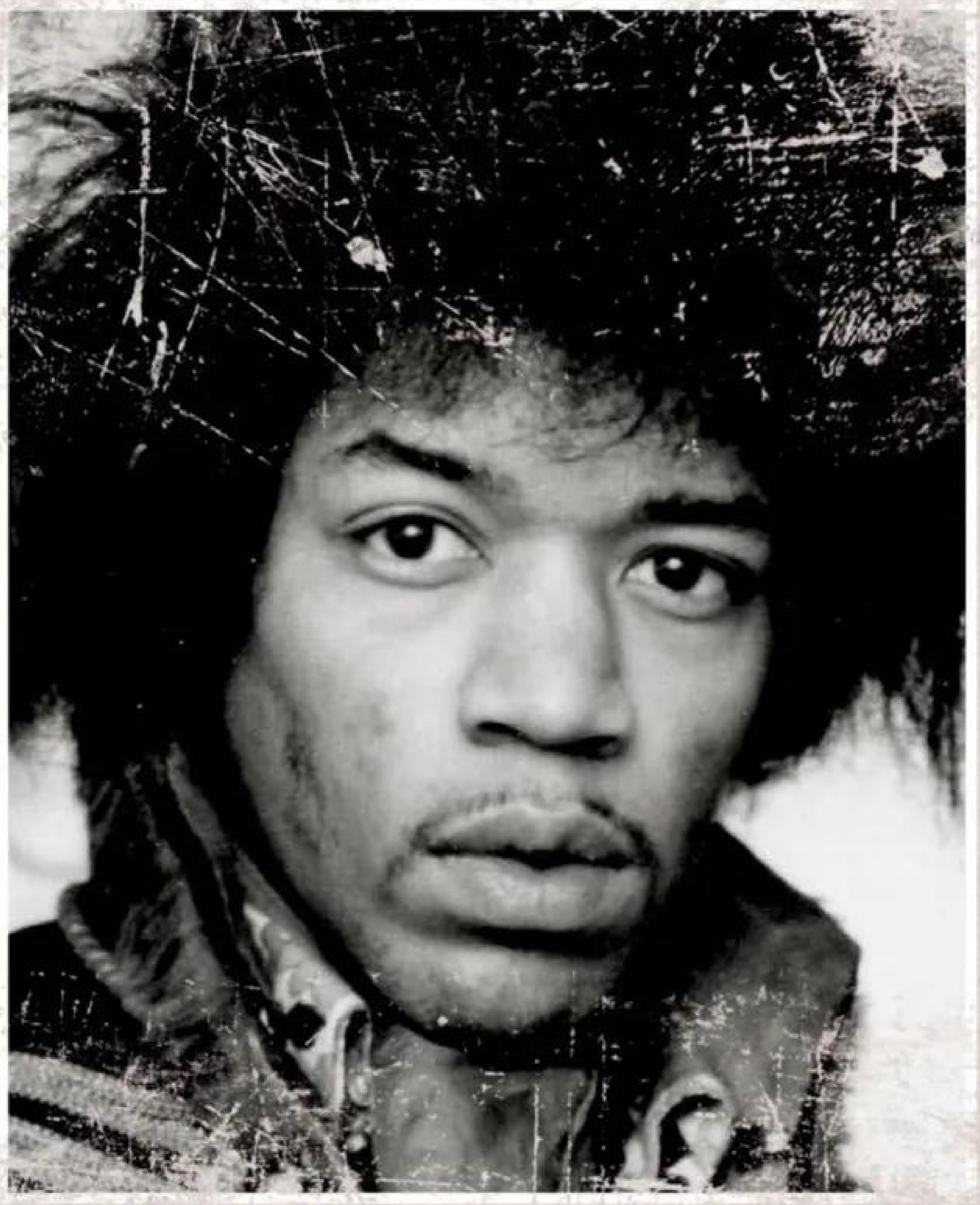
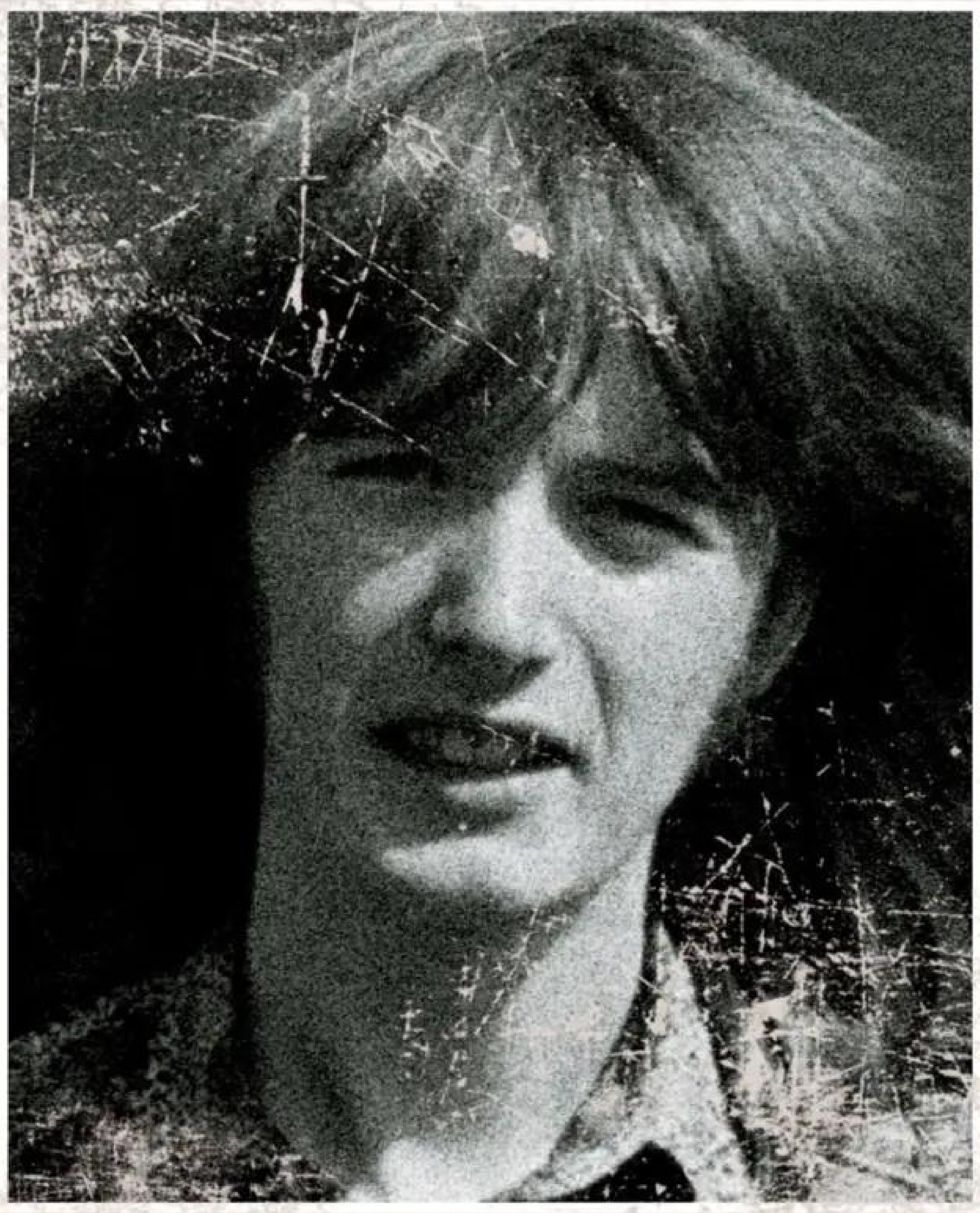






THE BIRTH OF HEAVY BLUES



When Jimi Hendrix arrived in London in 1966 he blew the minds of the British rock elite including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck. Soon, however, they would follow his lead and develop an explosive new form of electric blues...

Words: **Johnny Black**

GETTY X2, REX X2

Like all the great overnight sensations, Jimi Hendrix took years to get off the ground. His was a long road to fame: from the little boy who, in 1958, used his beat-up guitar to imitate TV cartoon sound effects, to the 1964 guitar-slinger who hired out his talents to Little Richard, The Isley Brothers and others, to the outlandish psychedelic six-string shaman who flew into London in late 1966.

However, within weeks of Hendrix being launched to the Big Smoke's goggle-eyed media at The Bag O'Nails club on Friday November 25, 1966, virtually every major British blues guitarist found himself rethinking his musical direction. Inevitably, the purists would continue to recycle the past and the unimaginative would slavishly emulate Hendrix, but a handful of inspired innovators would choose to fashion their own unique styles until, out of that seething maelstrom of creativity, heavy blues would be born.

1966, NOVEMBER 25

Having created a buzz with a handful of small-venue appearances, including the now legendary jam with Cream at Regent Street Polytechnic which had left Eric Clapton gobsmacked at his prowess, Jimi Hendrix was officially launched with a showcase gig in The Bag O'Nails, a tiny but influential music biz Mecca in London's Soho. As well as key journalists invited by Hendrix's manager Chas Chandler, a Bag O'Nails appearance ensured that the fledgeling Jimi Hendrix Experience would be seen by the venue's regular clientele, which included Paul McCartney, The Who, Eric Burdon and others.

JOHN MAYALL (The Bluesbreakers): When Jimi first came to England, Chas Chandler had put the word out that he'd found this phenomenal guitar player in New York, and he could play the guitar behind his head and with his teeth and everything. The buzz was out before Jimi had even been seen here, so people were anticipating his performance, and he more than lived up to what we were expecting.

TERRY REID (rock vocalist): We were all hanging out at The Bag O'Nails: Keith, Mick Jagger. Brian [Jones] comes skipping through, like, all happy about something. Paul McCartney walks in. Jeff Beck walks in. Jimmy Page. *[Ed's note: Page denies having been there.]* I thought, "What's this? A bloody convention or something?"

Here comes Jim, one of his military jackets, hair all over the place, pulls out this left-handed Stratocaster, beat to hell, looks like he's been chopping wood with it.

And he gets up, all soft-spoken. And all of a sudden, "WHOOOR-RRAAAWWRR!" And he breaks into *Wild Thing*, and it was all over. There were guitar players weeping. They had to mop the floor up. He was piling it on, solo after solo. I could see everyone's fillings falling out. When he finished, it was silence. Nobody knew what to do. Everybody was dumbstruck, completely in shock.

KEITH ALTHAM (journalist, NME): Jimi was almost too much, to be absolutely honest. He

The icon in action: Jimi with Strat and Marshall stack.

> “He breaks into *Wild Thing* and it was all over. Guitar players were weeping. They had to mop the floor up.”

was overwhelming in that small space. You knew something special was going on, you knew the guy was obviously a brilliant guitarist but it was very difficult to take in as a journalist.

JEFF BECK: The thing I noticed was not only his amazing blues but his physical assault on the guitar. His actions were all of one accord, an explosive package. Me, Eric and Jimmy, we were cursed because we were from Surrey. We all looked like we'd walked out of a Burton's shop window. He hit me like an earthquake when he arrived. I had to think long and hard about what I did next.

MICK JAGGER: I loved Jimi Hendrix from the beginning. The moment I saw him, I thought he was fantastic. I was an instant convert. Mr. Jimi Hendrix is the best thing I've ever seen. It was exciting, sexy, interesting. He didn't have a very good voice but made up for it with his guitar.

For almost half a decade, Hendrix had criss-crossed America, honing his talents as a sideman and studio guitarist, ratcheting up credits with Little Richard, The Isley Brothers, Sam Cooke and many others. His was an impressive résumé, but fame and fortune hardly seemed any closer in 1966 than they did at the start of the decade.

In the autumn of 1966, Chas Chandler, previously best-known as the bassist for The Animals, had 'discovered' Hendrix playing in a Greenwich Village club during a night out in New York and immediately decided to bring him to the UK. Chandler's instincts were absolutely right. Not only would Hendrix's musicianship and image make him stand out from London's axe elite, but had he remained in America, he would probably never have got his head above water.

JOHN LEE HOOKER: Eric Clapton, John Mayall and all those other people over in England made the blues a big thing. In the States, people didn't want to know.

TONY GARLAND (assistant to Chas Chandler): White America was listening to Doris Day. Black American music got nowhere near white AM radio. Jimi was too white for black radio. Here, there were a lot of white guys listening to blues from America and wanting to sound like their heroes.

STEPHEN DALE PETIT (contemporary blues guitarist/genre expert): The British contribution to the blues is equal, in my eyes, to what Robert Johnson or Blind Lemon Jefferson did – all of those guys through to Muddy Waters. I think it's a certainty that without the British blues boom, the music would not have anything remotely like the profile it does. Remember too that when Chas invited Jimi to London, Jimi did not ask about money or contracts. He asked if Chas would introduce him to Beck and Clapton.

Using his extensive contacts network, Chandler had engineered a huge profile for Hendrix since the day he arrived in London, but from November 1966 he shifted into overdrive. In the next two months, Jimi would play at The Marquee, The Cromwellian, Blaises, The Speakeasy and elsewhere, with London's rock elite turning out regularly to hear him. Any muso who hadn't heard of Hendrix after The Bag O'Nails launch would know him now, and already his influence was being seen as well as heard. Two weeks after The Bag O'Nails, when Cream appeared at The Marquee Club, Clapton was sporting a frizzy perm and he left his guitar feeding back against the amp, just as he'd seen Jimi do. ☛

Unsung six-string heroes

Six overlooked pioneers of blues-rock guitar.

LES PAUL

The man born Lester William Polsfuss was a genius. This is the guy who developed multitrack recording (from seized Nazi technology, no less), inspired the construction of the solid-body Gibson guitar that carries his John Hancock, and built the first guitar effects units. He was a huge star in the 40s and 50s, releasing layered guitar classics like *How High The Moon* with his then wife Mary Ford. The heavy blues explosion wouldn't have happened without his hard graft.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

Sister Rosetta was the first rock guitar hero. Chuck Berry, Elvis sideman Scotty Moore and Hank Marvin of The Shadows might get the props as pioneers but she was cuttin' heads before any of them. She was playing rock'n'roll in the 40s, and she played electric guitar onstage – not hidden in some orchestra pit but slung round her neck. Listen to her rapid-fire licks on her 1945 hit *Strange Things Happening Every Day* and say you don't hear her influence on Led Zep's first album.

LINK WRAY

Amplifier distortion was regarded as a fault before this one-lunged half-Shawnee Native American proto-punk deliberately poked holes in his speakers to get a filthy guitar tone. He used it to spectacular effect on his '58 single *Rumble*, the heavy blues almost 10 years ahead of the curve, which was banned on some radio stations for 'potentially' inspiring teen violence. *Rumble* gave us the power chord, fired up Pete Townshend and is valued by Jimmy Page as a life-changing 45.

Unsung six-string heroes

The overlooked pioneers of blues-rock guitar (continued).

DICK DALE

Everyone knows Dick Dale's pulverising '62 beast *Miserlou*, featuring his staccato picking technique that became a staple of every rock guitarist's trick bag after the single's release. Dale was seeking the kind of stage volume that could weld eyeballs to the back of teenage skulls and he pushed Fender to make more powerful amps. The whole 'arsenal of loud amps driven by a Fender Stratocaster' thing would be adopted by a kid named Jimi just a few years later...

LONNIE DONEGAN

Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Elvis and others might have sent a shiver of excitement through the bored kids of 50s Blighty, but it was The King Of Skiffle, Lonnie Donegan, who inspired them to form bands. He made skiffle look easy and pretty much all the British kids who would go on to deliver heavy blues cited Donegan as a catalyst. While he never received the riches he felt he deserved, he shaped the future of rock music more than any other Brit artist before The Beatles.

CLIFF GALLUP

If Jeff Beck's back catalogue were a crime scene then legendary Gene Vincent & His Blue Caps guitarist Cliff Gallup's dabs would be all over it. You can hear Gallup's jazz-inflected rockabilly licks in Beck's work from The Yardbirds and beyond. Gallup was an exceptional lead guitarist, as proved on Gretsch Duo Jet-fuelled tracks like *Race With The Devil* and *Be-Bop-A-Lula* – but he was modest and shunned the spotlight. He never knew the influence he had on the class of '67.

1966, LATE NOVEMBER
Hendrix jams at The Cromwellian with organist Brian Auger. This is reputedly the first gig at which Jimi played through Marshall equipment.
ANDY SUMMERS (guitarist with Zoot Money and The Police): He had a white Strat and, as I walked in, he had it in his mouth. He had a huge Afro and he had on a sort of buckskin jacket with fringes that were to the floor. Yeah, it was intense and it was really great. It kind of turned all the guitarists in London upside down.

1966, DECEMBER 13
The Jimi Hendrix Experience tape *Hey Joe* for popular TV show *Ready, Steady Go!* Watching is effects wizard Roger Mayer, who'd already built custom fuzz boxes for Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck, and would soon give Hendrix the Octavia octave-doubling device heard at the end of *Purple Haze*.
ROGER MAYER: I said, "Damn, this guy is incredible." He was the epitome of what any rock guitarist should be – we had no one of that calibre.

1966, DECEMBER 16
***Hey Joe* is released. It will peak at No.6 during its 11 weeks on the singles chart. Stephen Dale Petit makes the valid observation that, for a black man steeped in blues tradition, the marketing of Jimi's launch in the UK was as revolutionary as his music. "The idea that Hendrix was a psychedelic guitarist more than a blues guitarist was partly down to how he was packaged," reasons Petit.**
DAVE GREGORY (guitarist, XTC): I was 14 years old. I'd been playing guitar for about three months when I heard *Hey Joe*. I thought it was a dirge – a soul singer with a doom-laden backing chorus. When I finally got hold of the 45 some months later, I turned the disc over and found *Stone Free* on the B-side, which was another thing entirely – the wildest guitar playing I'd ever heard. I was so dazzled by his brilliance that I didn't immediately identify his playing as blues.
STEPHEN DALE PETIT: Psychedelia was the burgeoning trend and Hendrix in those flamboyant clothes was a ready fit for it, so it's not surprising lots of fans didn't see him as a bluesman, but guys like Clapton and Beck would have known exactly where Hendrix was coming from. They realised Hendrix personified everything that every English blues musician aspired to. He was also their worst fear, because he wasn't 60 years old and from the plantation. He was the same age as them but what they'd learned second-hand, he had learned on the circuit, playing with the originals.
JIMI HENDRIX: Blues, man. Blues. For me that's the only music there is. *Hey Joe* is the blues version of a one-hundred-year-old cowboy song. Strictly speaking it isn't such a commercial song and I was amazed the number ended up so high in the charts.
MIKE VERNON (British blues record producer): At the time, I never really thought of him as being a blues guitarist. The blues hardly needed a reboot as it was already on its way with the help of Clapton, Peter Green etc. He was, undeniably, a refreshing change from all that had gone before him, although to some degree his antics were only extensions of early performers like Gatemouth Brown. But a blues guitarist? Mmm… well, he certainly could play and sing the blues when he chose to, but really, he was an innovator in what was to become the rock marketplace. To my way of thinking, more guitarists were influenced by Eric Clapton and Peter Green, and then Stevie Ray Vaughan, than Jimi Hendrix.
MARK KNOPFLER: The first time I heard *Hey Joe* on the radio, I completely freaked and immediately ran out and bought the record. I didn't even have a record player.

1966, DECEMBER 16
On the same day *Hey Joe* hits the shops, Hendrix plays at Chiselhurst Caves, London, where he first meets Roger Mayer, destined to play a major role in developing Jimi's array of guitar effects.
ROGER MAYER: I went there and brought some of my devices, such as the Octavia. I'd shown it to Jimmy Page, but he thought it was too far out. Jimi said, the moment we met, "Yeah, I'd like to try that stuff."

1966, DECEMBER 21
The Jimi Hendrix Experience play at Blaises Club, London, UK.
CHRIS WELCH (reviewer, *Melody Maker*): Jimi Hendrix, a fantastic American guitarist, blew the minds of the star packed crowd who… heard Jimi's trio blast through some beautiful sounds like *Rock Me Baby*, *Third Stone From The Sun*, *Hey Joe* and even an unusual version of The Troggs' *Wild Thing*. Jimi has great stage presence and an exceptional guitar technique which involved playing with his teeth on occasions and no hands at all on others! Jimi looks like becoming one of the big club names of '67.

1967, JANUARY 24
On their first appearance at The Marquee, London, The Jimi Hendrix Experience break the house record. Support band The Syn will later evolve into Yes.
PETER BANKS (guitarist, The Syn/Yes): It was a very peculiar gig. All The Beatles were there, and the Rolling Stones. Clapton and Beck and every other guitar player in town came along and we had to play to all these people. They were waiting for Jimi Hendrix but we had to play once, come off and then play another set. So people were going. "Well, thank God they've gone." Then we came back on again.
ERIC CLAPTON: He definitely pulled the rug out from under Cream. I told people like Pete Townshend about him and we'd go and see him.
PETE TOWNSHEND: The thing that really stunned Eric and me was the way he took what we did and made it better. And I really started to try to play. I thought I'd never, ever be as great as he is, but there's certainly no reason now why I shouldn't try. In fact, I remember saying to Eric, "I'm going to play him off the stage one day." But what Eric did was even more peculiar. He said, "Well, I'm going to pretend that I am Jimi Hendrix!"

1967, JANUARY 29
The Who headline a gig at The Saville Theatre, London, UK, supported by The

Led Zeppelin: fellow architects of the heavy blues sound.

Jimi Hendrix Experience, Koobas and Thoughts. In the audience are Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce of Cream, plus Brian May (later to play guitar for Queen).

BRIAN MAY (fan): I'd heard the solo on *Stone Free* and refused to believe that someone could actually play this. It had to be some kind of studio trickery, the way he talks to the guitar and the guitar talks back to him. I was already playing in a band called Smile and I thought I was a reasonably good guitarist, so I knew it wasn't possible. So I went to the Saville, determined to be a disbeliever, but I was swept off my feet. I thought, "This guy is the most astounding thing I've ever seen." And he did the *Stone Free* solo live, absolutely perfectly. It was back to the drawing board for me.

ERIC CLAPTON: I don't think Jack had really taken him in before… and when Jack did see it that night, after the gig he went home and came up with the riff [*Sunshine Of Your Love*]. It was strictly a dedication to Jimi. And then we wrote a song on top of it.

GETTY x3, REX

"Blues, man. Blues. For me, that's the only music there is. *Hey Joe* is the blues version of a 100-year-old song."

1967, FEBRUARY 3

At Olympic Studios, London, Hendrix completes the recording of *Purple Haze*, which includes the first use of Roger Mayer's Octavia pedal.

EDDIE KRAMER (engineer): At the end of the song, the high-speed guitar you hear was actually an Octavia guitar overdub we recorded first at a slower speed, then played back on a higher speed. The panning at the end was done to accentuate the effect.

ROGER MAYER: The basis was the blues, but the framework of the blues was too tight. We'd talk first about what he wanted the emotion of the song to be. What's the vision? He would talk in colours and my job was to give him the electronic palette which would engineer those colours so he could paint the canvas.

1967, MARCH 8

Hendrix plays at The Speakeasy, London.

JEFF BECK: For me, the first shockwave was Jimi Hendrix. That was the major thing that shook everybody up. Even though we'd all established ourselves as fairly safe in the guitar field, he came along and reset all of the rules in one evening. Next thing you know, Eric was moving ahead with Cream, and it was kicking off in big chunks.

Marshall Law

How Jimi Hendrix turned an amplifier into a definitive blues-rock icon.

THE BIRTH OF THE 100W STACK

It was The Who's Pete Townshend and John Entwistle who initiated the use of the 100-watt Marshall stack. Sick of failing to drown out their noisy mod audiences and be heard over the manic drumming of Keith Moon, they approached Jim Marshall, drum teacher and boss man at J&T Marshall Musical Instruments in Uxbridge Road, Hanwell, West London, and his engineers Ken Bran and Dudley Craven. At that point Marshall sold the JTM45, a 50-watt job based around the classic Fender Bassman.

By late '65, Townshend and Entwistle were using the first four pre-production Marshall JTM45 100 heads, the first draft of the now iconic model 1959 JTM100 Super Lead. Entwistle was the first to connect his new amp to a 4x12 cabinet but it was Townshend who first put one 4x12 on top of another to create a 'stack'. "I could never work out why most people played with them on the floor," he said. "I wanted them belting in my earhole."

Despite all their great work, The Who soon switched allegiance on to other amp brands like Vox, Sound City and Hi-watt. It was left to Jimi Hendrix to smash, beat and dry hump the 100-watt Marshall stack into rock iconography.

Jimi, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell of The Experience first visited Marshall HQ on October 8, 1966. "I met Jimi through having taught Mitch Mitchell to play drums," remembered Jim Marshall, "and Mitch brought this guy along to the factory one day. This character said to me, 'I'm going to be the greatest,' and I thought, 'Oh no, not another American wanting something for nothing.' But his next words were, 'I don't want you to give them to me. I will pay the full price. I just want to know that wherever I am in the world, I won't be let down.' And Jimi, without doubt, became our greatest ambassador."

Hendrix now had the right backline to amplify his Fender Stratocasters and he soon set about establishing himself as the guitarist to fear and admire. "I can still remember him scaring the living daylights out of all the big English guitarists when he first came over here," said Marshall. "They'd never heard or seen anything like Jimi. No one had. His talent was extraordinary."

Thanks to British acts breaking ground in the US, Stateside guitarists began picking up the scent of Marshall. "Murray The K had a live show with Mitch Ryder, Otis Redding, Cream and The Who [1967, in Manhattan], and I was in The Vagrants, who also played on some of those shows," Mountain guitarist Leslie West tells *The Blues*. "I remember seeing The Who come out with these huge Marshall cabinets and make a fantastic noise. Those Marshalls had a lot to do with their sound. I knew right away I had to get some of them and eventually Manny's, a great music store in New York City, started bringing them in. I think I must have been the first guy in line to get them."

1967, MARCH 23

As *Purple Haze* enters the UK singles chart, Hendrix sells a Stratocaster at Selmer's Music Store in Central London, where Paul Kossoff, later to form Free, works as a sales assistant.

PAUL KOSSOFF: He had an odd look about him and smelled strange. He started playing some chord stuff like in *Little Wing*, and the salesman looked at him and couldn't believe it. Just seeing him really freaked me out. I just loved him to death. He was my hero.

1967, MAY 11

Eric Clapton buys his first wah wah pedal at Manny's guitar shop in New York City.

ERIC CLAPTON (guitarist, Cream): They said that Jimi had one and so that was enough for me. I had to have one too.

With the release of *Are You Experienced*, repeated plays made it possible for critics and fellow musicians to examine Hendrix's oeuvre in greater depth. Now, aspects of his playing which had first seemed totally revolutionary could clearly be seen to have roots not just in traditional blues, but in British blues.

1967, MAY 12

***Are You Experienced* is released in the UK. The album includes *Foxy Lady*, which includes a Jimmy Page riff lifted from the October 1966 single *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* by The Yardbirds.**

STEPHEN DALE PETIT: *Love Or Confusion* takes a couple of British things, elements of The Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows* and The Yardbirds' *Shapes Of Things*, both of which use a home key, go down a step and then return to the home key.

Using Marshall amplification, sonically and texturally Hendrix could sound very different than his influences and heroes, but the last three licks of the solo in *Hey Joe* clearly display the feel and the phrasing of Albert King. *Stone Free* exhibits the approach, attitude and composition – including melodic content and vibrato – of Hubert Sumlin

Generally I hear Hubert Sumlin and Willie Johnson all through Hendrix's playing – a clear line can be drawn from Willie Johnson through Hendrix to white blues-based hard rock and heavy metal.

JOE SATRIANI: *Red House* was a nod to his blues roots. I think the most underrated part of his playing is his sense of melody in everything he played, his way-in-the-pocket rhythm playing, and his combining of both into memorable parts that defined each song as a unique piece of music.

JOHN LEE HOOKER: I've always loved that song [*Red House*]. I loved the way Jimi did it. I never did see him play. I know he was seen as somebody in the rock side of things, but underneath he was a blues man. He played a mean blues guitar.

LESLIE WEST (guitarist, Mountain): I heard Hendrix playing *Are You Experienced* and I said, "What the fuck is this?" It blew my mind! The way he used that whammy bar? Forget about it. He'd knock those strings out of tune and then he'd stretch them right back into tune. The guy was unreal.

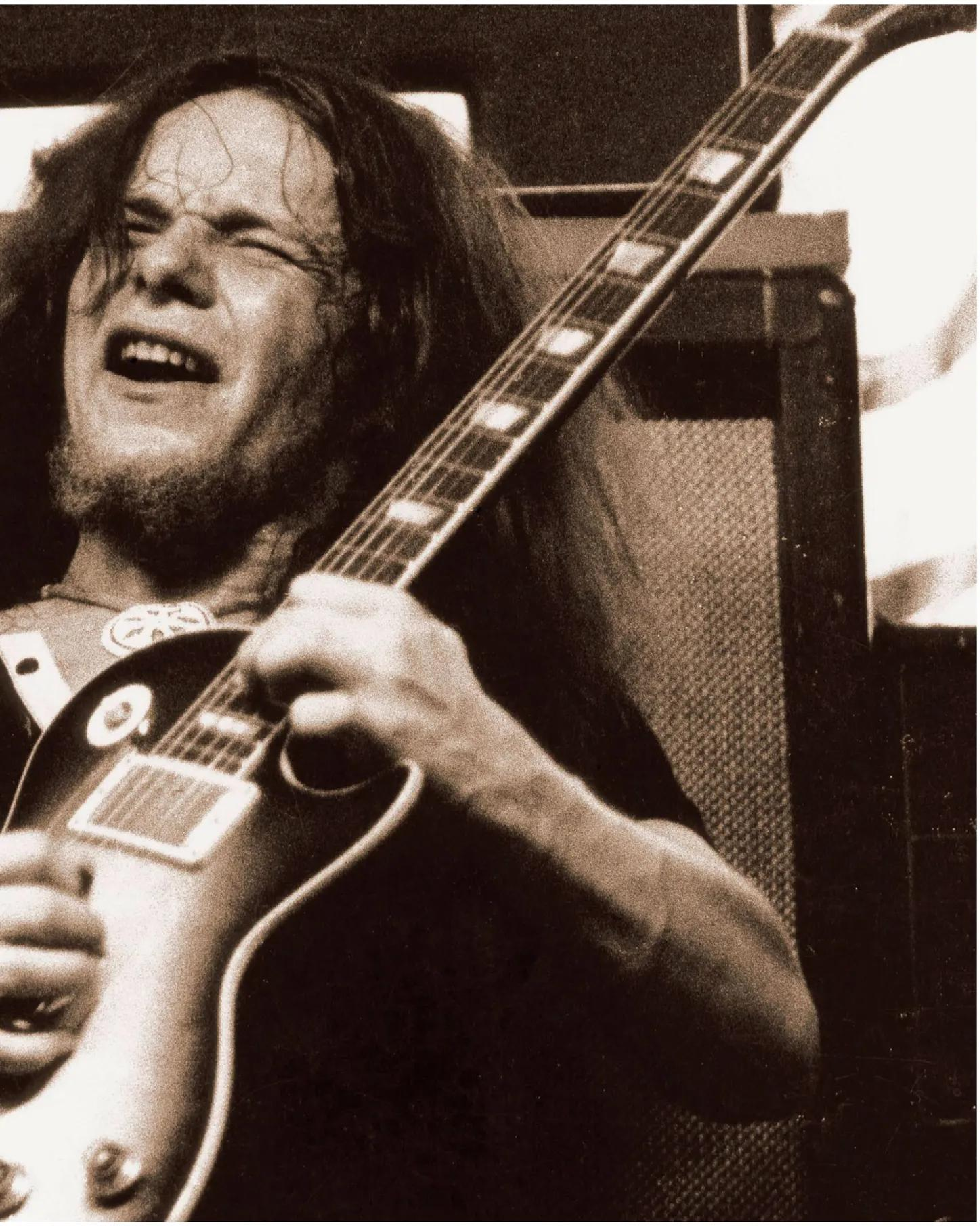
Free agent: Paul Kossoff helped write the book on heavy blues guitar...

When Hendrix returned to America, on June 18, 1967, to play at Monterey Pop Festival, a whole new transatlantic crop of guitarists was exposed to the phenomenon for the first time. Mike Bloomfield, Johnny Winter, Stephen Stills and Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top are only a handful of those who subsequently acknowledged Hendrix's powerful impact on them. Having achieved massive success at Monterey, Hendrix next began touring America.

1967, JUNE 18

The Jimi Hendrix Experience play at Monterey Pop Festival, Monterey, California.

STEVE MILLER: I was immediately amazed when he opened with *Killing Floor*. I had heard Wolf and Hubert play it so many times in Chicago, and when I saw what Jimi did to it, it was as if what I had been trying to do for years suddenly became perfectly clear. I immediately understood what I had been longing and searching for.



The essentials

Our pick of the 20 heavy blues albums you need to own.

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE Are You Experienced (1967)

Jimi's debut screamed his appreciation of the blues heavyweights, while announcing that he wasn't afraid to torch their set texts. Thrilling if you were a listener. Terrifying if you were a guitarist.

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE Axis: Bold As Love (1967)
The gonzoid intergalactic revue sketches might be your abiding memory of *Axis*, but Jimi's rush-recorded second album was home to some stingers. "There's such a fierceness to his playing," says Philip Sayce. "But he was completely connected to the source."

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE Electric Ladyland (1968)
It had more colours than a detonated Dulux factory, but Jimi's third album still referenced his chitlin' circuit roots, from the kazoo-powered R&B bounce of *Crosstown Traffic* to the power-blues jam *Voodoo Chile*. *Ladyland* remains his sky-kissing peak.

CREAM Fresh Cream (1966)
If Eric Clapton's move to quit the Bluesbreakers smacked of callow career suicide, it was vindicated by his power-trio's 1966 debut. EC's solos ensured that *Fresh Cream* kept one foot in the blues.

FREE Tons Of Sobs (1968)
Four oiks with an £800 recording budget didn't seem much to conjure with, but Free's debut was an absolute belter. It might not have charted, but the cultural ripples were undeniable.

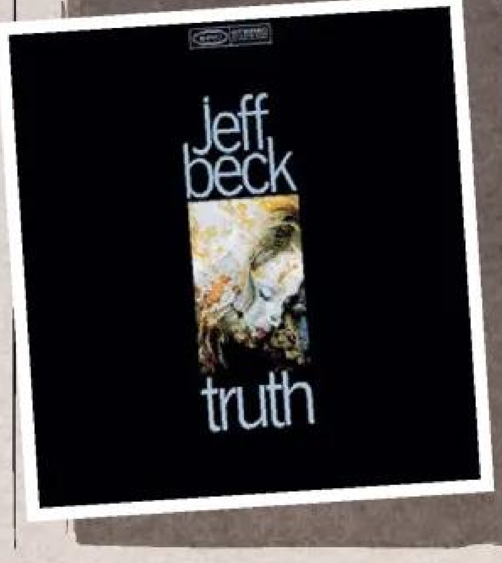
LED ZEPPELIN Led Zeppelin (1969)
Granted, Zeppelin were light-fingered operators on their debut, plundering the back pages of Willie Dixon, J.B. Lenoir et al, but their stone-cold genius lay in hitting the throttle and minting that sound.

LED ZEPPELIN Led Zeppelin II (1969)
The official line is that this album marks the gearshift from blues to rock, but Jimmy Page's first love is undeniably still present in the scuttling mania of *The Lemon Song* and the route-one *Heartbreaker*.

TEN YEARS AFTER Ten Years After (1967)
While Alvin Lee had yet to find his voice as a songwriter, the band's white-knuckle way with a cover saw them prise apart the fingers of Willie Dixon et al to claim standards like *Spoonful* as their own.

FLEETWOOD MAC Then Play On (1969)
The Mac were shortly to morph beyond recognition, but Peter Green's final album at the helm was a blues treasure trove, taking in *Rattlesnake Shake*'s slithering funk, the out-there improv of *Searching For Madge* and – for US punters – the deathless clatter of *Oh Well*.

JEFF BECK GROUP Truth (1968)



Beck's high-water mark was so ferocious that it often nudged beyond heavy blues into proto-metal. The tough covers of *You Shook Me* and *I Ain't Superstitious* took *Truth* to No.15 in the US. "We didn't know at the time," noted Rod Stewart, "how important this album would become."

"Hendrix was seen as someone on the rock side of things, but underneath he was a blues man."

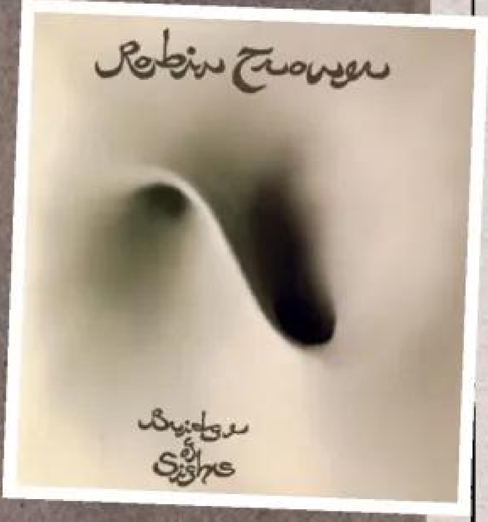
1967, AUGUST 9
The Jimi Hendrix Experience play at The Ambassador Theatre, Washington DC. In the audience is Nils Lofgren.
NILS LOFGREN: When I saw Jimi Hendrix, I just was possessed. I realised, "Oh my God, this is what I want to do. It's going to be my career." And there was no turning back.

1967, OCTOBER 17
Jimi Hendrix jams with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, standing in briefly for Mick Taylor, at Klooks Kleek, London.
JOHN MAYALL: When he sat in with you, he would just fall right into whatever you were doing. He was just a natural musician and I don't think upstaging was any part of his persona. He loved to play, he dug music and he loved the attention he was getting.
MICK TAYLOR: I just thought he was amazing. For a guitarist to have that energy in his playing, and also the control and the rhythm. You know, for most guitarists it's incredibly difficult to play like that, or to even play anywhere near that standard in a three-piece group. I mean, Eric Clapton did it with Cream. And Hendrix was great, the way he switched from rhythm to leads. His guitar and his voice were almost like the same thing.

GETTY

The essentials

The top 20 heavy blues albums you need to own (continued).



ROBIN TROWER
Bridge Of Sighs (1974)
Trower had always favoured the US originators over the British boomers, but he walked the tightrope on this career peak. "It's a very powerful piece of work," he said.

JEFF BECK GROUP
Beck-Ola (1969)
Beck-Ola arrived with a sleeve disclaimer, admitting that as it was "almost impossible" to write new songs, the band had focused instead on "heavy music". Maybe so, but when Beck and Stewart butted heads on highlights like *All Shook Up*, the derivative sounded just dandy.

TASTE Taste (1969)
The debut album by a 20-year-old Rory Gallagher and his Cork power-trio can still scorch your eyebrows. *Blister On The Moon* sets a roaring pace that's somehow maintained throughout.

LESLIE WEST Mountain (1969)
The New Yorker cited Cream as his starting pistol. "The British imitated our black blues players," West told *The Blues*. "We imitated the British imitating black guys. The more things change, the more they stay the same."

BLUE CHEER Vincebus Eruptum (1968)
The West Coast trio's debut piled everything in, turned it up, and oiled the wheels with lashings of LSD. Not even The Who could match their *Summertime Blues*. It's one part music, two parts assault and battery.

RORY GALLAGHER Deuce (1971)
Gallagher's second album was bent on capturing the crush of the front row. Often tracking immediately after gigs to hold the momentum, *Deuce* exploded out of the speakers and rarely let go of your lapels.

AC/DC T.N.T. (1975)
This second Oz-only album marked the moment when AC/DC became the fist-tight, crunch-blues miscreants of legend. Tracks like *The Jack* and *High Voltage* were smash-and-grab belters.

WHITESNAKE Ready An' Willing (1980)
A solid-gold line-up – Micky Moody, Bernie Marsden, Jon Lord, Ian Paice – ensured that even the filler here was thumping, while hooky standouts like *Fool For Your Loving* helped the album slither to No.6 in the UK.

GARY MOORE Still Got The Blues (1990)
The success of Moore's stopgap blues project was the happiest of accidents. "That whole album was killer," noted Danny Bryant. "He was a rock artist, he'd been in Thin Lizzy, and had solo hits, and he just did a blues album in three weeks. He was worried the fans wouldn't accept it, but it became his biggest seller."

RIVAL SONS
Head Down (2012)
"The next album," threatened Jay Buchanan back in 2011, "is gonna sound like a hammer and a buzzsaw getting in a fight." True enough, the LA band's breakthrough third entered the ring with the pugnacious *Keep On Swinging*, and rained endless blues-rock anvils. Finally, after a good pummelling, they kissed it better with the gorgeous Zep-folk of *True*.

Smokin' hot: Jimi Hendrix with Eric Clapton in 1967.

REX x2

If Hendrix was the trigger, the first heavy blues bullet out of the gun was Cream's second album, *Disraeli Gears*. A psychedelic quantum leap ahead of their debut, sonically much heavier but still dominated by Clapton's blues guitar solos, it delivered their American breakthrough, reaching No.4 on the Billboard chart.

1967, NOVEMBER 3
Cream release *Disraeli Gears*.
ERIC CLAPTON: We went off to America to record *Disraeli Gears*, which I thought was an incredibly good album. And when we got back, no one was interested because *Are You Experienced* had come out and wiped everybody else out, including us. Jimi had it sewn up. He'd taken the blues and made it incredibly cutting-edge. I was in awe of him.

1967, DECEMBER 15
The Who release *The Who Sell Out*.
STEPHEN DALE PETIT: I think it was Jimi's arrival that made a lead guitar player out of Pete Townshend, because when he got into his boiler-suit era he was suddenly soloing, really flying, playing some amazing shit as a soloist, which he never did before.

1968, FEBRUARY 10
The Jimi Hendrix Experience headline at The Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles. Support band The Electric Flag feature guitarist Mike Bloomfield.
MIKE BLOOMFIELD: For years, all the Negroes who'd make it into the white market made it through servility, like Fats Domino – a lovable, jolly, fat image – or they had been spades who had been picked up by the white market. Now here's this cat, you know: "I am a super spade, man. I am, like, black and tough."

1968, MAY 10
The Fillmore East, New York City, USA.
PAUL STANLEY (guitarist, Kiss): I grew up going to Fillmore East, seeing Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Humble Pie. Hendrix was like somebody from another planet. God bless Stevie Ray Vaughan, but there wouldn't be an SRV without a Hendrix.

1968, JULY
Deep Purple release their debut album, *Shades Of Deep Purple*, which includes a cover of *Hey Joe* in the Hendrix style.
RITCHIE BLACKMORE (guitarist, Deep Purple): I was impressed by Hendrix. Not

Clapton in '67: wearing his Jimi influence on his sleeve... and head.

The Real Me

Jimi Hendrix by those who knew him best... AS TOLD TO DAVID SINCLAIR

"Hendrix has since been made into something he never thought he would be, I'm sure of that. I got a letter inviting me to go to a ceremony in LA where they put a star for him in Hollywood Boulevard. That would have been about the biggest insult imaginable in the '60s, to suggest to him that one day 'Jimi you will be such a part of the establishment, they will put a star for you on Hollywood Boulevard'. It was as if everything he had stood against and played against was being forced upon him after he'd died. He might have seen the funny side of it, but I certainly didn't go to the ceremony."
Gerry Stickells (Roadie/Road Manager)

"After he died, it seemed as if everyone knew Hendrix, but he didn't make friends easily, certainly not in public because he was basically very shy. When I first met him, he was very quiet and polite. It was only when we were working that he used to do the wild man bit. He was quite disorganised. He would lose things and he used to have an untidy room. He wouldn't know how to check in at an airport. I had to check in for the group."
Noel Redding (bassist, The Experience)

"He wasn't an extrovert at all. He was a very reserved but happy character. I shared two flats with him and he was a perfectly straight dude. He'd do much the same as anyone else, except he'd have a guitar on when he was doing it. He'd fry his breakfast in the morning with a guitar round his neck. We played board games, like Risk, a lot.
"He was very easy to work with in the studio; we only ever had one ruck, the first time we went in to record. We got into quite a heated row over the sheer volume of the guitar. At one point he said, 'This is useless I'll never be able to make a record here'. As it happened I'd just come from the visa office and I had his passport and a return ticket to America in my pocket. So I handed them to him and I said, 'Go on then. Fuck off back to America'. And he just burst out laughing. That was the end of that and we never argued again."
Chas Chandler (first manager and producer)

"Jimi was too easy to get along with. He just had a real gentleness and a kindness about him and in my opinion it got him in a lot of trouble. Not everyone took advantage of him, but then again I saw a lot of people who did.
Buddy Miles (drummer, Band Of Gypsys)

"Jimi could be as moody as hell, but I always found him funny. The band never split up for me. Jimi and I always played together, and it was fun. Even while the Band Of Gypsys was going on, we carried on working in the studio together. He put up with a lot of bullshit, but the music was the most important thing. And if that ain't right, forget it."
Mitch Mitchell (drummer, The Experience)

so much by his playing, as his attitude. He wasn't a great player, but everything else about him was brilliant. Even the way he walked was amazing.

1968, AUGUST
The Jeff Beck Group release their debut LP, *Truth*. Along with Cream and Led Zeppelin, they would prove pivotal in taking rock into heavier territory and paving the way for heavy metal.
AL KOOPER: *Rock My Plimsoul* uses a quarter-note triplet turnaround which is very effective and the track bounces around like a pinball machine. Beck sounds a lot like Hendrix on this.

As the decade entered its final year, Hendrix was losing focus, but stunning debut LPs by Led Zeppelin, Free, Taste and others confirmed that heavy blues was fast becoming the name of the game. This innovative form of blues eschewed authenticity, did not try to remain true to Mississippi or Chicago, and was more excited by the possibilities of creating a contemporary music that reflected the passions and interests of the rising generation.

1969, JANUARY 12
Led Zeppelin release their eponymous debut LP, which scores 73 weeks on the Billboard chart and 79 in the UK. Its most obviously blues-oriented cuts are *You Shook Me*, *I Can't Quit You Baby* and *How Many More Times*, but these were interwoven with intimations of what would become heavy metal and shades of art rock, dragging the blues superstructure into pastures new. All of this was rendered aurally fresh by Page's innovation of placing an extra microphone 20 feet away from the band to gather their ambient sound. Contemporary critics hated it, but time has proven this to have been a groundbreaking leap forward.
JIMMY PAGE: There were a lot of improvisations on the first album, but generally we were keeping everything cut and dried. Consequently, by the time we'd finished the first tour, the riffs which were coming out of these spaces, we were able to use for the immediate recording of the second album.
JOHN MAYALL: People like Jimmy Page, Gary Moore, Jeff Beck and several others, you could tell they were incorporating things that Jimi was doing into their music. His influence was very strong in that heavy blues direction.

1969, MARCH 14
Free release their debut LP, *Tons Of Sobs*. More minimal and less eclectic than Zeppelin's debut, it was nevertheless another radical fusion of blues structures with hard rock attitudes, delivering a vibrant attack to the band's distinctively melodic songs.
PAUL RODGERS (vocalist, Free): The songs I had written up to that point were blues songs. I looked around and I saw everybody – the bands that had real credibility and meaning, somebody like Jimi Hendrix and Cream – what they were doing was taking the blues to a different place. They were making it their own. I suppose Hendrix was almost like a psychedelic blues and Cream. Well, that's what it was in a way – psychedelic blues. And I said to Paul [Kossoff, Free guitarist]: "That's what we have to do – take what we have now and write our own songs and find our own identity, basically." So it grew right out of the blues.

1969, APRIL 1
Taste, led by guitarist Rory Gallagher, release their eponymous debut LP. Arguably the most traditionally blues-oriented album of this burgeoning new generation, *Taste* was nevertheless infused with the restless energy that was supercharging blues as the decade closed. Hendrix himself was evidently impressed because, when asked how it felt to be the greatest guitarist in the world, he's said to have replied, "I don't know, go ask Rory Gallagher."
RORY GALLAGHER : Before Hendrix, Jeff Beck had distorted his guitar and so had Keith Richards, and there was distortion on the early 50s blues records. They didn't use it as a technique but they had small amplifiers that were turned up very loud and it became part and parcel of the Chicago blues sound. Hendrix trimmed it and made it into an art form.

1969, JULY
Leslie West releases his debut LP, *Mountain*, a decidedly heavy blues offering, clearly inspired by the Cream/Hendrix power trio format, and produced by Cream collaborator Felix Pappalardi, who also played bass.
LESLIE WEST: Led Zeppelin, Cream and Hendrix were huge at that time. Being from New York, I was never into the San Francisco sound – the Dead, the Airplane and all that. But when these guys started coming over from England, a different world opened up. I mean, the Stones had great blues riffs in the mid-60s, like *Satisfaction*, *The Last Time*. But when Cream and Hendrix came along, I knew it was time for me to start practising. Cream was probably the most influential on me. It was weird because the British guys were imitating Black American blues guys, and then we were imitating the British guys.

1969, AUGUST
Humble Pie release their debut LP, *As Safe As Yesterday Is*, on Immediate Records in the UK.
PETER FRAMPTON (guitarist, Humble Pie): Clapton's blues style was very sophisticated and charming. Very 'on the money'. Hendrix comes over. [His playing] wasn't ugly, but it was more ballsy. A little out of tune, but it was full of passion. I think it's his passion that I love most of all.

1969, NOVEMBER 7
Hendrix is at the Record Plant, New York City, USA, working on *Izabella* and *Room Full Of Mirrors*.
LESLIE WEST (guitarist, Mountain): When we were recording *Mountain Climbing* in the Record Plant, Jimi was recording *Band Of Gypsys* in the next door studio. So he came in and listened

GETTY, PHOTOSHOT x2

Slash: heavy blues fan and Hendrix disciple...

to *Never In My Life* and he looked at me and said, "Nice riff, man." He gave me a compliment. That was all I needed to hear.

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN: By the end of the 1960s, Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton had turned the rock'n'roll generation on its collective head. Of course, that would not have been possible without the music created by the great black blues players such as Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Fred McDowell, Buddy Guy and the great B.B. King.

Jimi Hendrix died just months later, on September 18, 1970, but the heavy blues boom he initiated lived on and thrived. ZZ Top would release their first album in January 1971, the same year in which the Stones got noticeably heavier with *Sticky Fingers*. Kiss would unleash their debut in February 1974, and proof of the lasting appeal of heavy blues music came with the emergence of Stevie Ray Vaughan in 1983 and Joe Bonamassa at the start of the new millennium.

"The attraction with Jimi was just that he had this uninhibited, fluid style that basically screamed."

JOE BONAMASSA: I don't think there's any music that you hear on the radio today that would be possible without Jimi Hendrix.

JOE SATRIANI: He was the deepest blues player. He played the saddest stuff and he played the funniest. He played the most outside stuff, but it was really from the gut. He strayed from the traditional blues playing, yet he always seemed to incorporate the moans and the cries into a phrasing that was completely blues.

SLASH: I think the attraction with Jimi was just that he had this uninhibited, fluid guitar style that basically screamed. It had this over-the-top sound to it that just kind of drew me in.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN: I loved Jimi a lot. He was so much more than just a blues guitarist. He could do anything.

JIMI HENDRIX: I've been imitated so well I've heard people copy my mistakes.

Sources : the interviews with John Mayall, Leslie West, Dave Gregory and Stephen Dale Petit in this feature are all by Johnny Black. All other quotes come from archive interviews in Guitar Player, Guitar World, Rock And Folk, Rolling Stone, Uncut and The Quietus.

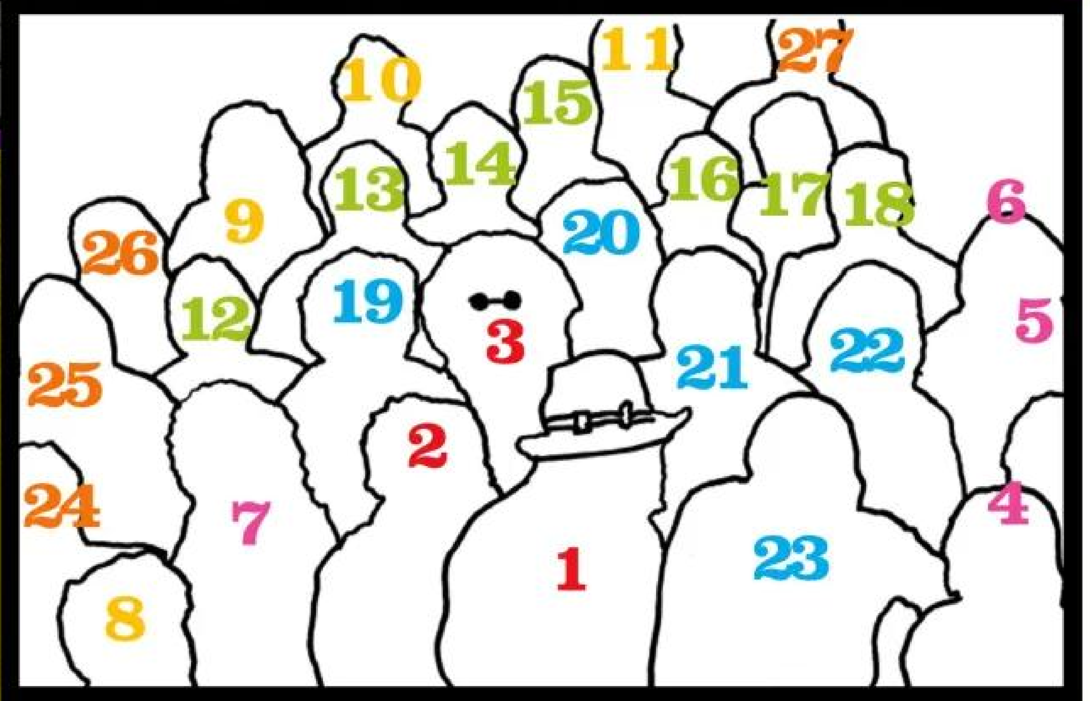
For more information on Jimi Hendrix, see the official website at www.jimihendrix.com.

The Cosmic Variety Show

Syd Barrett was catatonic. **Jimi Hendrix** was encouraging **Keith Emerson** to throw knives at him. **Lemmy** was one of the roadies. Welcome to the **Jimi Hendrix/Pink Floyd/The Move/The Nice/ Amen Corner/Eire Apparent/Outer Limits** jaunt of late 1967, the package tour that was the end of an era and "like a school trip". On acid.

Words: **Glenn Povey** Illustration: **Magictorch**

Most of the cast of characters on that 1967 "school trip" (The Nice are conspicuous by their absence).



Jimi Hendrix Experience
1 Jimi Hendrix
2 Mitch Mitchell
3 Noel Redding
Pink Floyd
4 Roger Waters
5 Syd Barrett
6 Richard Wright
7 Nick Mason
Eire Apparent
8 Eddie Graham
9 Henry McCullough
10 Chris Stewart
11 Dave Lutton
Amen Corner
12 Blue Weaver
13 Alan Jones
14 Dennis Bryon
15 Mike Smith
16 Neil Jones
17 Clive Taylor
18 Andy Fairweather-Lowe
The Move
19 Trevor Burton
20 Ace Kefford
21 Bev Bevan
22 Roy Wood
23 Carl Wayne
The Outer Limits
24 Gerry Smith
25 Jeff Christie
26 Stan Drogie
26 Steve Isherwood

In November 1967, a star-studded but unlikely assemblage of psychedelic, rock and soul bands set out in a fleet of cars, Transit vans and coaches on a 21-date tour. They would play theatres and civic halls the length and breadth of Britain, in a vague attempt to emulate the traditional 'package' tour of yesteryear.

Veteran music biz promoters Tito Burns and Harold Davison, who promoted the tour, knew the economic value of the theatre package tour well – they'd made a business out of it back in the day. But the combination of bands drawn up for this tour was a bit way-out even for those times. This wasn't a package tour featuring end-of-pier comedians or cabaret acts, this was a bill featuring the cream of the new music. Featuring some of the craziest, most pioneering and – it would turn out – most influential bands of all time: The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Pink Floyd, supported by The Move, The Nice, Amen Corner, Eire Apparent and The Outer Limits.

Future Stiff Records co-founder Dave Robinson was Eire Apparent's Road Manager. "In 1967 you were beginning to get the 'album artists'," he says. "More musical, get your rocks off. So it was the last of those kind of tours. Prior to that it was people doing their little three-minute numbers from *Top Of The Pops*, really. So you had The Move, who were kind of singley but also had delusions of musical grandeur, and The Nice, who although they had 12 minutes, usually played just one number."

These days, when one Led Zeppelin gig attracts ticket requests in their millions, a similar bill would sell out stadiums in a flash. But there were no guarantees back in 1967. Promotional touring didn't exist back in the 60s, bands just accepted the fact that if they weren't in the recording studio their management expected them to be out on the road.

For the Jimi Hendrix Experience this would be their second full tour of the UK, having spent much of the summer months in mainland Europe and the US, basking in the glory of having played an awe-inspiring, now legendary, set at the Monterey Festival. Hit singles had ensured much anticipation – Hendrix went from zero to hero in a matter of weeks. Pink Floyd, meanwhile, did the reverse: they took an unhealthy delight in frightening their audiences into submission, or disgust. And although they had enjoyed chart success, their career was hanging in the balance. "We could clear halls so fast it wasn't true," recalled Nick Mason. "I mean, they were outraged by what came round on the revolving stage and they lost very little time in trying to make this clear."

The show was comprised of two halves with an interval. Newcomers The Outer Limits and Eire Apparent opened with just eight minutes apiece; Amen Corner were next up with 15 minutes, and The Move closed the first half with a 30-minute set. After a 20-minute interval The Nice were next, followed by Pink Floyd, with 15 minutes each. Hendrix closed the show, with an incendiary 40-minute performance.

It didn't give the bands much time to prove themselves but it was good promotion, as The Move's manager Tony Secunda later recalled: "The idea was to cram as many bands on to the bill as possible, not simply because it made financial sense but also because it gave massive exposure to bands who might never get out there."

Speaking to many of the participants today, what's remarkable about this particular 1967 tour is just how 'nice' it all was. "The whole thing was that time of 'peace, love and brown rice, man' and all that stuff," recalls Bev Bevan, then drummer with The Move. "A lot of the guys were getting stoned. It was a very peaceful tour."

"Everybody was mucking about," recalls The Nice's Keith Emerson. "It was like a huge school trip."

A school trip with knife-throwing, instrument smashing and acid-related breakdowns, that is.

Holding the cavalcade of artists together onstage was the compere, BBC Radio One DJ Pete Drummond. Like many of the pop DJs of the time, he enjoyed a secondary income from playing records and introducing artists at festivals, all-nighters and tours such as this.

With so many change-overs, Drummond was left to fill-in between bands. "I had to stand there and say: 'It'll be a few minutes before the next band… And being here in Glasgow reminds me of the Scotsman who…' and just go into some joke. Nine times out of 10 they'd just shout out 'Fuck off!' It was no ego boost for me. Hendrix used to say: 'Did you hear me tonight? I was out the back yelling 'Fuck off!' early on!' Yeah, I heard you, Jimi. I'm getting that audience so wound up against me that you could be the shit worst player on earth and they'd love you! Roger Waters –

The Nice: only had one hit before the tour.
GETTY

Pink Floyd: "aloof"
AVALON

The Jimi Hendrix Experience: "Even Noel and Mitch didn't know what he was going to do."
GETTY

especially Roger – used to come up to me and say: 'I've got a good joke for you today.' I had all these salient words of jokes written on my wrist."

"It was a showcase for bands riding on Hendrix," Drummond says. "I think he got half the gate and everybody else was on fixed fees. I think [Jimi's bassist] Noel Redding and the drummer, Mitch Mitchell, were salaried. I was on £25 a night and, apart from Hendrix, I had more money than anybody. Even though [Pink Floyd] were second headliners on this tour they weren't earning the money.

I had to buy food for bands – curry and chips for the Amen Corner when we hit Cardiff. I think the Floyd earned about £20 between them per day, so they weren't that bad."

"A lot of the guys were getting stoned. A very peaceful tour..."

Bev Bevan, The Move

Being the opening act was never going to be an easy task for anyone, but Irish group Eire Apparent rose to the challenge. They began life in early 67 as a show-band called The People, and found themselves scratching a deadend living in Dublin, before making a break for London. There they ran into an old acquaintance from back home: the aforementioned Dave Robinson.

Eire Apparent got a gig at the UFO club in London supporting Procol Harum. They impressed Chas Chandler, the Animals bassist and manager of Jimi Hendrix and Soft Machine, to the extent that he and his business partner Mike Jeffrey were later banging on the band's dressing room door offering them a management contract.

"It was to be a joint venture then," Robinson recalls. "I was running the band but they would have 50 per cent of it, and would do the office work, the administration. So I ran around with the band on the road and they looked for the main chance for us to become big. And because of Jimi Hendrix we were able to get through a lot of doors. It was a very opportune connection."

"When you've got somebody like that behind you it's not the money, it's the upward move in the music business," remembers Eire Apparent's guitarist Henry McCullough. "We had to sit in their offices and wait for someone to give us £20 so we could go and eat. That's how well signed up we were!"

"That was a great apprenticeship," Robinson laughingly recalls. "Chas Chandler was very musical, being the bass player from The Animals, so I learnt a lot from him about presenting the group, live, mainly. And Mike [Jeffrey] was the very canny, very cunning manager-type person who was obviously up to no good most of the time."

For the four young lads out of Belfast it was a steep learning curve, performing alongside some of rock's royalty, and doubtless also a fast-track education in the rock-star lifestyle. "You know," says McCullough, "If you're on for 15 minutes you've got 23 hours left in your day. And with not being at home, you could end up anywhere. Not only physically, but mentally."

After the tour, Eire Apparent played a regular support to Hendrix across Europe and the US, and Jimi produced their second album, *Sunrise*. But lasting success was not to be. In 1968 McCullough was thrown out of Canada for possession of marijuana and was forced to quit the band. These days he's best remembered as a member of Joe Cocker's Grease Band and Paul McCartney's Wings. The remainder of the group failed in their attempt to re-establish themselves in the UK after such lengthy tours abroad, and split in 1969. Vocalist Ernie Graham later joined Clancy and then Help Yourself; drummer Dave Lutton played in T. Rex through the mid-70s, and bassist Chris Stewart joined US band Poco.

Probably the least well-known band on that tour of '67 were founded at Leeds University that same year. The Outer Limits were The Rolling Stones' flamboyant manager Andrew Oldham's hot new signing to his Deram/Immediate record label. Their debut single, *Just One More Chance*, was released in June, and it was probably just

about all they had time to play in their slot. Unfortunately for them their second single, *The Great Train Robbery*, released in early 1968, was considered distasteful by the BBC, even five years after the actual event, and the band never fully recovered. (Frontman Jeff Christie did, however, find lasting fame as the composer of the song *Yellow River* which he took to Number One in the UK chart, for what seemed like forever, with his band Christie in 1970.)

If The Outer Limits had their, well, limits, arguably one of the most talented acts on the bill was the seven-piece Welsh blues-soul outfit Amen Corner. Despite having released only one single at the time of the tour, *Gin House Blues*, in the summer of 67 they were seasoned musicians, having gigged constantly throughout Britain. (Singer Andy Fairweather-Low is still gigging today, playing guitar with the likes of Eric Clapton, Bill Wyman and Roger Waters's band – a post he's held for some 22 years.)

"Our manager, Ron King, was very persuasive," Fairweather-Low remembers. "Roger Waters remembers our first meeting. He said: 'Your manager screamed at me because I shouted at one of you. Ron said: 'I'll break your fucking legs.' And, believe me, when Ron said: 'I'll break your fucking legs,' he would! It was a real possibility that it would happen. Roger remembered that. I didn't remember any of that. But that was our first introduction [to the music industry], we went straight into Don Arden and Ron King… So that, to us, was normal."

Former Amen Corner sax player Allan Jones is nowadays a tour promoter. Like many musicians, he was in awe of Hendrix. "I remember Newcastle City Hall," he says. "Jimi was very often out of tune, because he used to bash his guitar around like crazy. And he may have been a little bit out of it and didn't quite tune up his guitar properly before he went on, or whatever. And he was constantly going out of tune. This night, he was playing his Gibson Flying V, and he was so pissed off with the tuning that he actually took the guitar off his shoulder and threw it at the Marshall stack. And it fucking landed in the stack. The place just erupted and went fucking ballistic! It was a one-off. It was one of the most incredibly exciting moments I can remember."

Such wild performances put many of the other bands in the shade; for Amen Corner it became an inspiration. Halfway through the tour Amen Corner were proving so popular that, at Chas Chandler's insistence, they swapped places with The Move, so that they could close the first half of the show with their song *Otis Redding Revue*.

Less than two years later Amen Corner called it quits. Sax players Allan Jones and Mike Smith went on to form Judas Jump, while the rest, led by Fairweather-Low, formed the band Fair Weather. Drummer Dennis Byron and keyboard player 'Blue' Weaver later become part of The Bee Gees' band.

It would have been difficult not to have been aware of The Move back in the autumn of 1967. Their manager, Tony Secunda, had a fearsome reputation for publicity seeking, and made damn sure The Move were in the news at every possible opportunity. Sadly, he also didn't know when to stop.

When Secunda publicised the Move's third single, *Flowers In The Rain*, with a postcard featuring an image of the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson in bed with his secretary Marcia Williams, it resulted in a High Court ruling that all royalties from the single be paid, in perpetuity, to a charity of Wilson's choice.

The Move's troubles were compounded by the fact that they had their own version of Syd Barrett in the band in the shape of 'Ace' Kefford, their gifted bass player. His spates of crippling depression, more than likely aided by his intake of LSD in this period, began to blight his life, as it has done to this day.

"Syd Barrett actually went mad on that tour."

Nick Mason, Pink Floyd

That aside, there was much at stake. A friendly rivalry existed between the Jimi Hendrix Experience and The Move, and it was hard to say who was most likely to upstage who at this point. Hendrix had the passion, but The Move had scored four top 10 hits against Hendrix's three. This often led to the usual practical jokes which touring bands are prone to playing, partly to relieve the boredom of touring. "I remember The Move playing once, and I rode a bicycle across the stage," Noel Redding once recalled. "Another time we put stink bombs in Bev Bevan's bass drum pedal."

The Move also had one other trick up their sleeve: the anarchistic stage antics of Carl Wayne. At one particularly memorable show at the end of the previous year, they shared the billing with Pink Floyd and The Who. "At the Roundhouse, Carl Wayne smashed an all-American, psychedelically painted Cadillac convertible with an axe, with two strippers on the roof as he was doing it!" recalls Bev Bevan. TV sets and busts of Hitler were routinely smashed to

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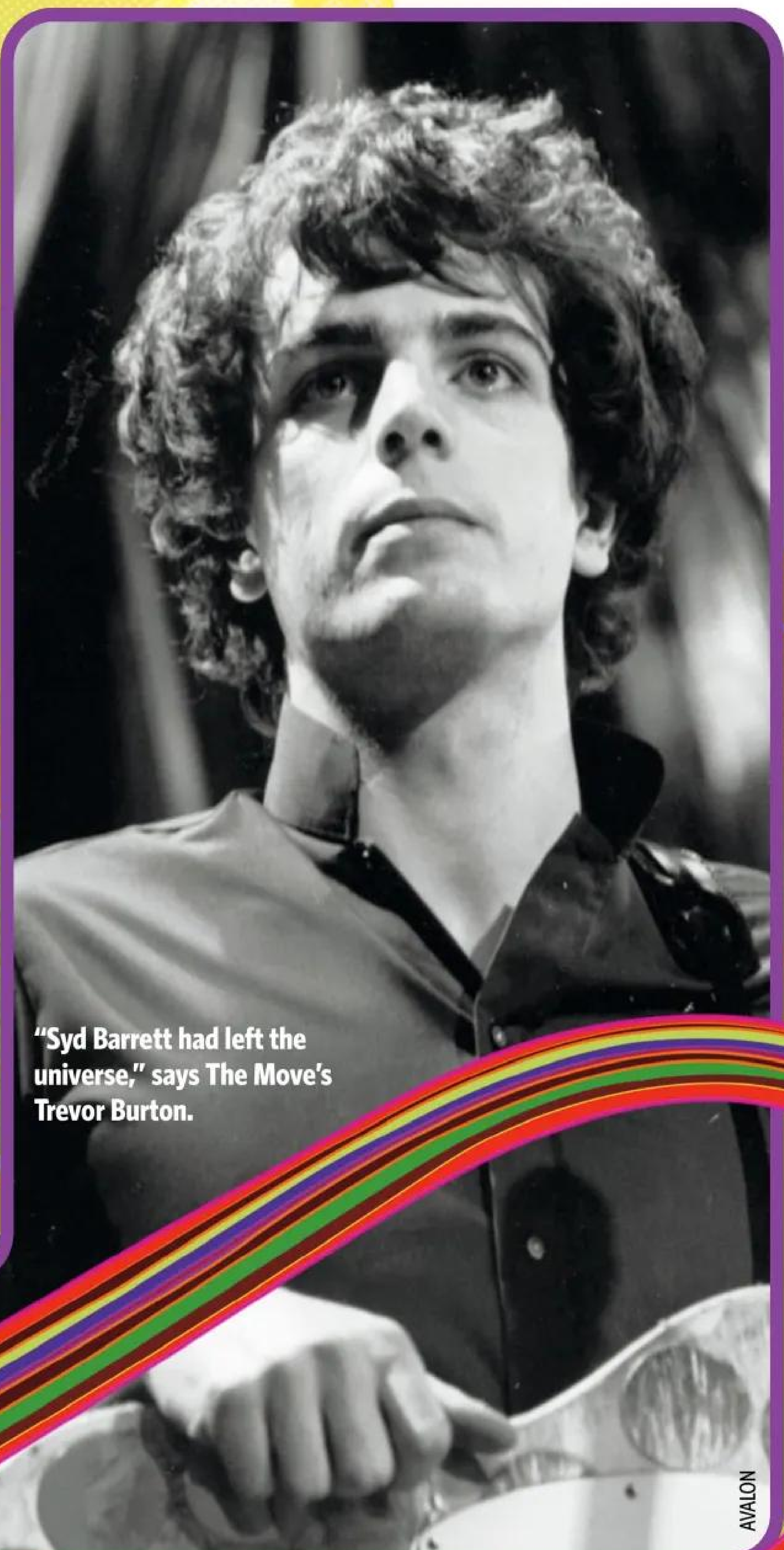
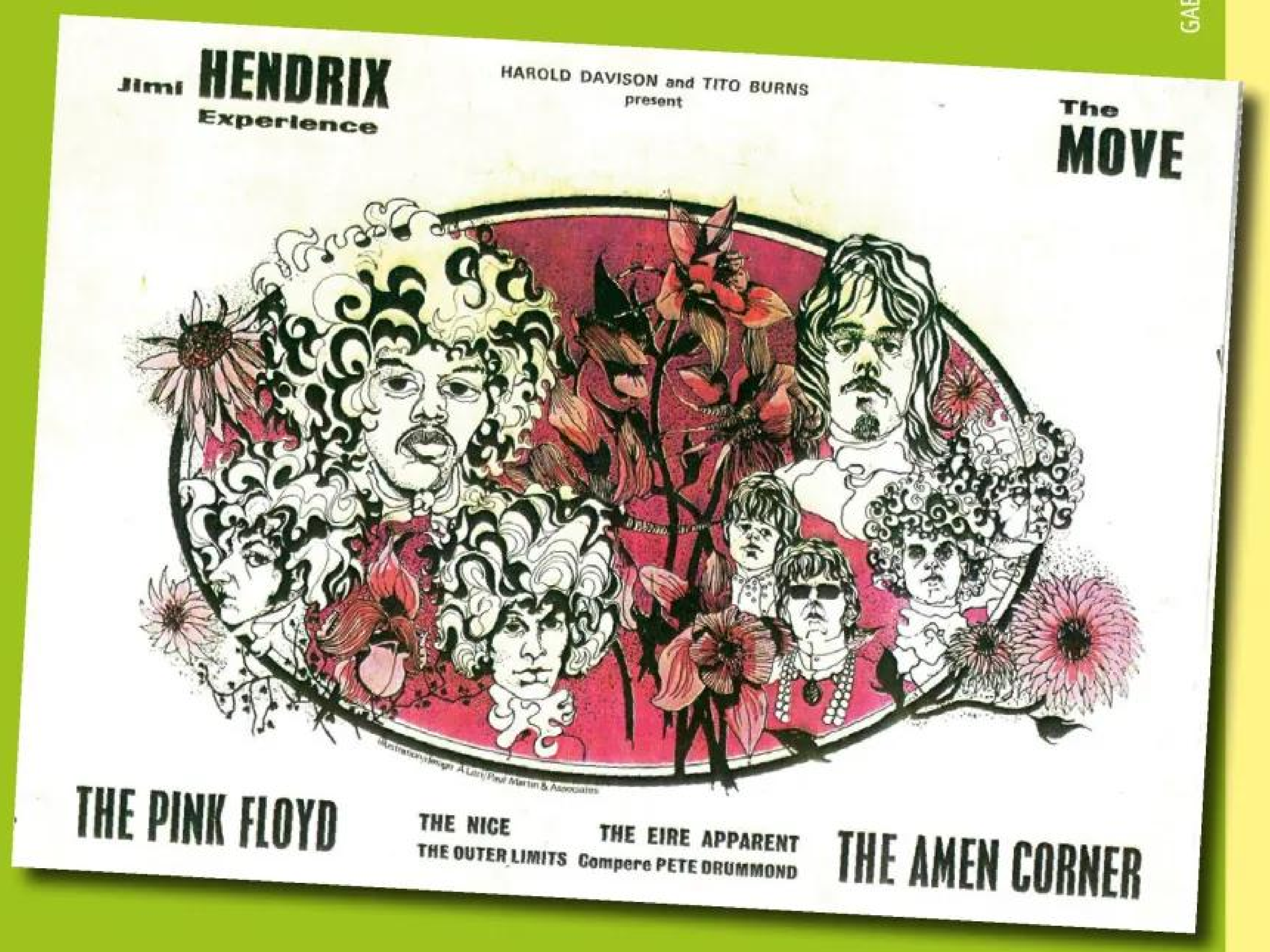
Pink Floyd: the US tour immediately before this one, pushed Syd to his limits.



"Syd Barrett had left the universe," says The Move's Trevor Burton.

AVALON

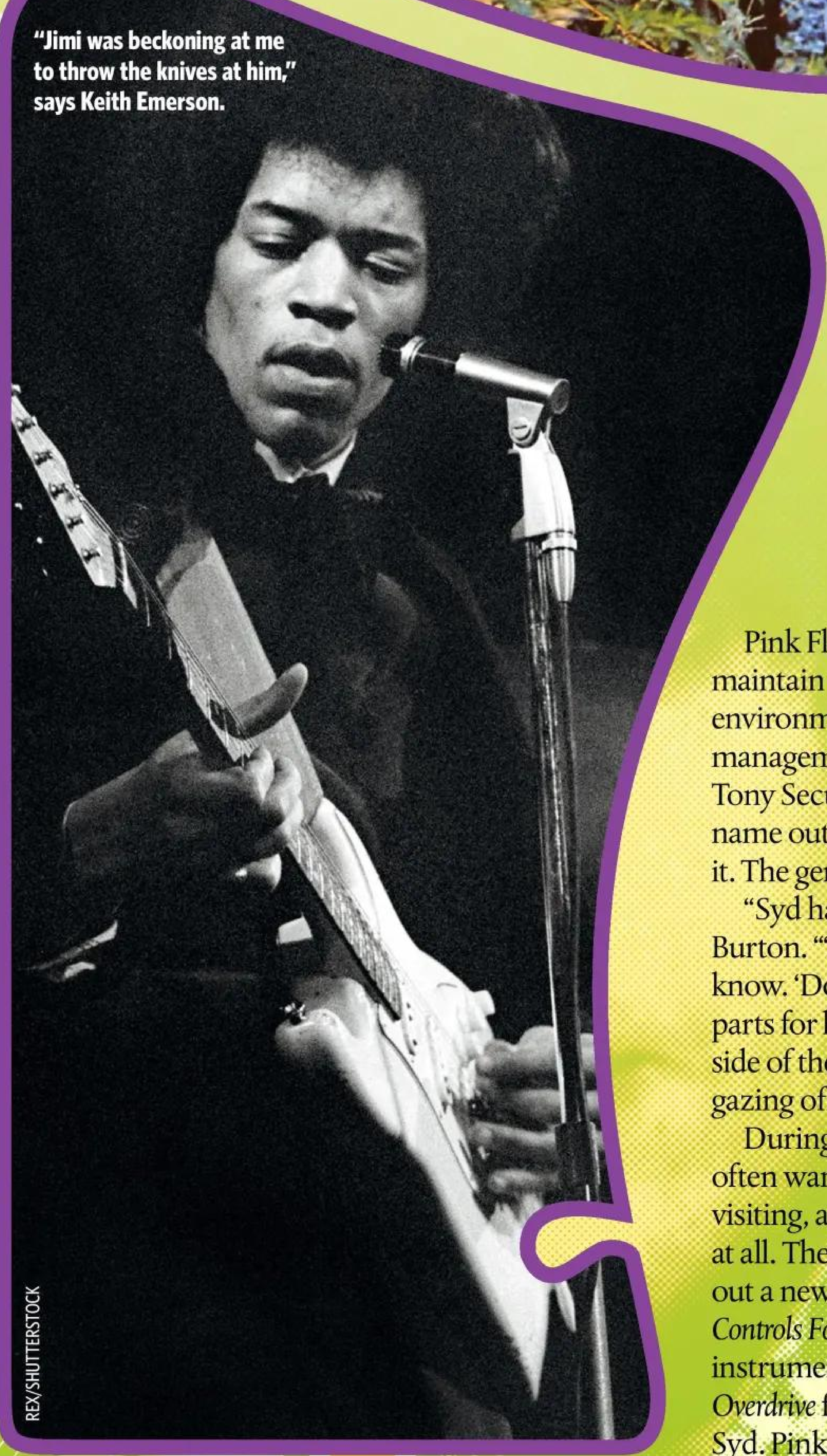
Amen Corner: their popularity pushed them up the bill as the tour went on.



GAB ARCHIVES/REDFERNS

The Move had their own version of Syd Barrett in the shape of acid-head bassist 'Ace' Kefford.

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS



"Jimi was beckoning at me to throw the knives at him," says Keith Emerson.

REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

"Floyd were arty students – we were hardened rockers."

Trevor Burton, The Move

Pink Floyd desperately needed this tour in order to maintain their profile in an increasingly difficult environment. "Basically, they [Pink Floyd's management] were worried about Syd Barrett," said Tony Secunda, "But we needed to keep the band's name out there, but nobody knew if Barrett was up to it. The general feeling was that he wasn't."

"Syd had left the universe," says The Move's Trevor Burton. "'Put a mark on stage for him to stand', you know. 'Don't move!' Henry McCullough used to do parts for him," Burton laughs. He'd be standing on the side of the stage doing Syd's parts while Syd was gazing off into the distance."

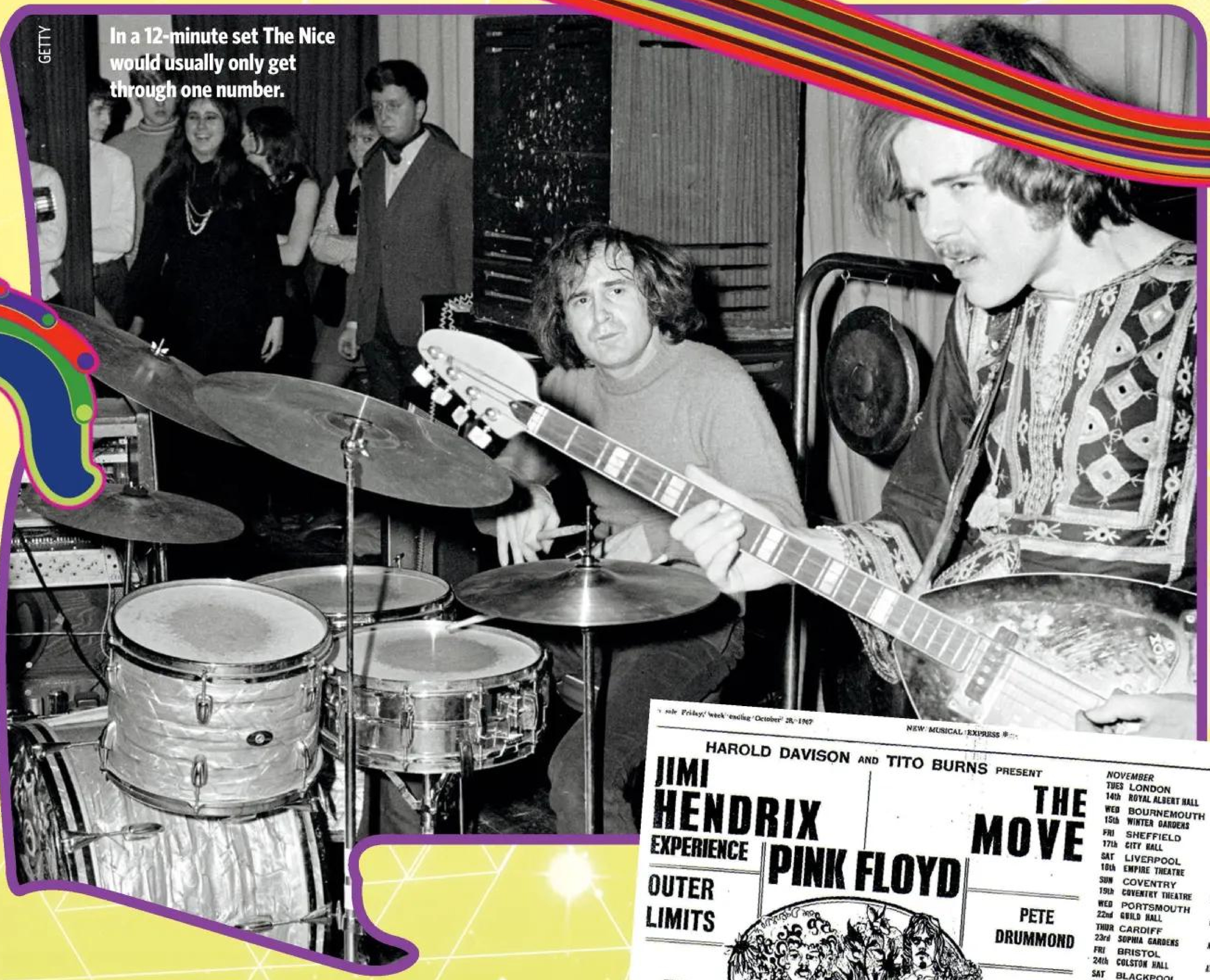
During the course of the 67 tour Barrett would often wander aimlessly around the town they were visiting, and either stand onstage limply or not appear at all. The opt-out clause for Pink Floyd was to string out a new Roger Waters composition called *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*, or perform instrumentals such as *Pow R Toc H* or *Interstellar Overdrive* from their debut album, with or without Syd. Pink Floyd's light show was also an asset – it was something they could hide behind.

Secretly the band were already thinking of how to replace him. And The Nice guitarist Davy O'List looked a very likely candidate. "I'd watch them every night and I learned their songs," O'List says. "One night I stood in the wings so they could see me enjoying the music. Syd went off on a walk one night and didn't come back. I knew their music and I said I could perform it well, so they asked me on."

It may have been an audition of sorts, but Pink Floyd soldiered on regardless. Their third single, *Apples And Oranges*, was released on November 17, early in the tour, but it failed to make any ground on the UK chart – which is as a good an indicator as any of the impact their set was having on audiences.

Barrett continued his downward spiral and almost consigned the band to the dustbin of history with his wayward antics. Had it not been for Roger Waters taking the lead after the '67 tour it could well have been the end of Pink Floyd.

"To be honest with you, the Floyd were very aloof," says Amen Corner's Allan Jones, "Very much into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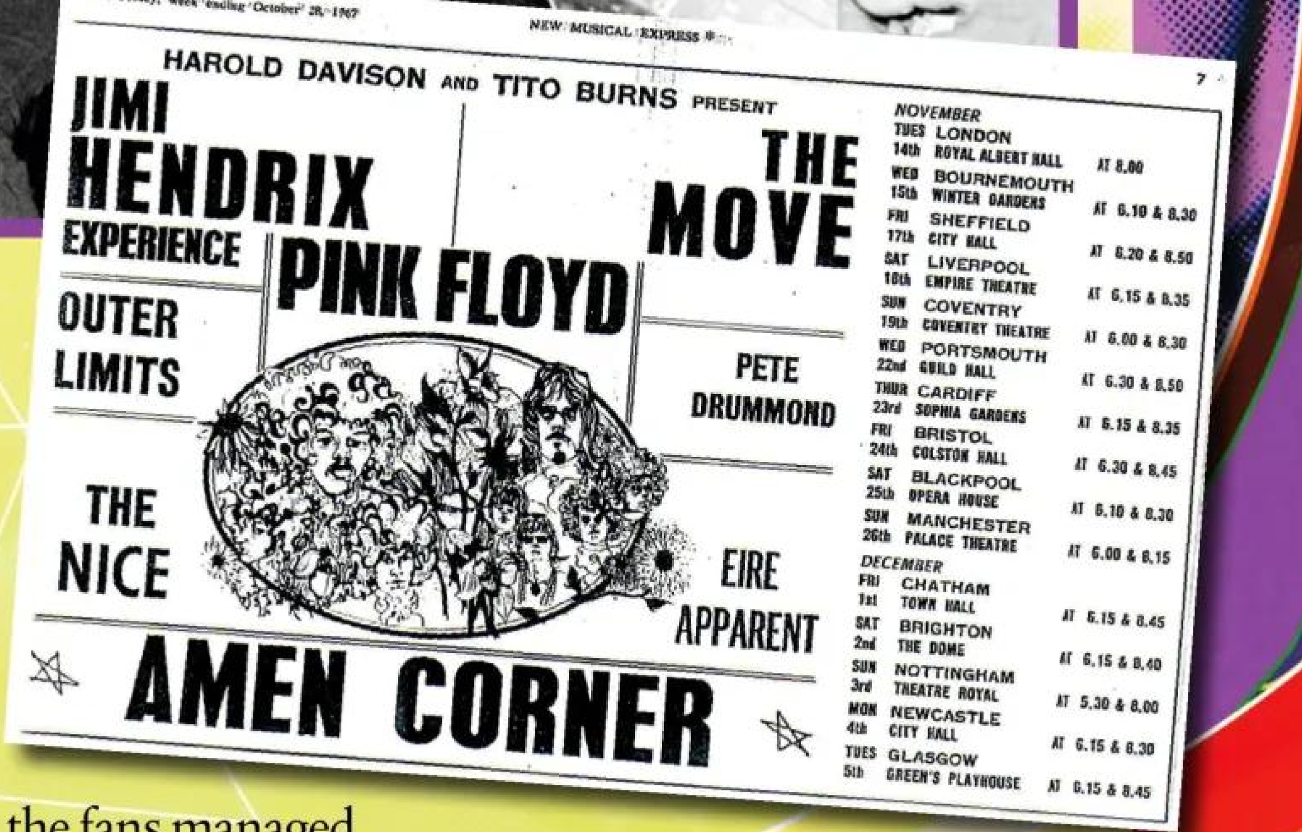
In a 12-minute set The Nice would usually only get through one number.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NOVEMBER		
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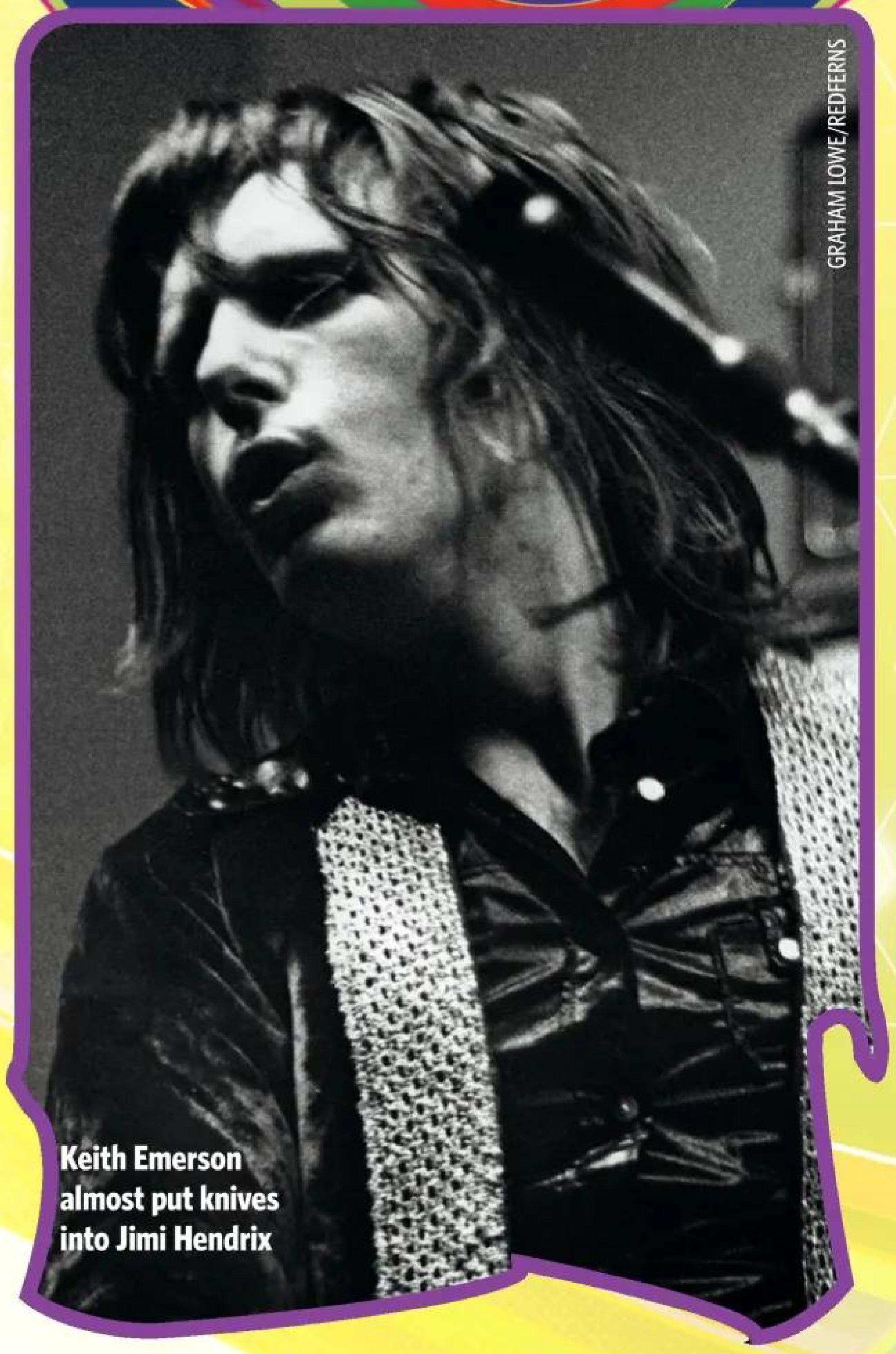
FRI 17th	SHEFFIELD CITY HALL	AT 6.20 & 8.50
SAT 18th	LIVERPOOL EMPIRE THEATRE	AT 6.15 & 8.35
SUN 19th	COVENTRY COVENTRY THEATRE	AT 6.00 & 8.30
WED 22nd	PORTSMOUTH GUILD HALL	AT 6.30 & 8.50
THUR 23rd	CARDIFF SOPHIA GARDENS	AT 6.15 & 8.35
FRI 24th	BRISTOL COLSTON HALL	AT 6.30 & 8.45
SAT 25th	BLACKPOOL OPERA HOUSE	AT 6.10 & 8.30
SUN 26th	MANCHESTER PALACE THEATRE	AT 6.00 & 8.15
DECEMBER		
FRI 1st	CHATHAM TOWN HALL	AT 6.15 & 8.45
SAT 2nd	BRIGHTON THE DOME	AT 6.15 & 8.40
SUN 3rd	NOTTINGHAM THEATRE ROYAL	AT 5.30 & 8.00
MON 4th	NEWCASTLE CITY HALL	AT 6.15 & 8.30
TUES 5th	GLASGOW GREEN'S PLAYHOUSE	AT 6.15 & 8.45


GRAHAM LOWE/REDFERNS

Keith Emerson almost put knives into Jimi Hendrix

their own thing. And at the time, I have to say I wasn't that impressed with them. They never seemed to be in tune and it was all very disjointed. It didn't really do anything for me live, but I still really loved the singles."

Andy Fairweather-Low agrees: "You know, 'aloof' and 'insular' are two very good descriptive words of how we felt about them, then. What they thought about us I haven't got a bloody clue! And Syd I remember as being not really part of the team. We all travelled – well the majority travelled – on one big bus. The Floyd travelled separately. And I think they travelled separately themselves too. I don't think there was any great bonding going on there."

"The Floyd didn't mix at all, with anybody," says Burton. "They were all like arty student types and we were fucking hardened rockers, you know, and they kept themselves to themselves. Noel and me quite often would go into their dressing rooms and try and communicate, but it didn't work very often."

"They weren't inclined to socialise," confirms Keith Emerson. "I do recall one moment on the tour of overhearing Roger Waters ask the rest of the band: 'Well, when is it your turn in the studio?' And I asked Roger: 'What? You don't all go in the studio together?' And he said: 'Oh, no, no, no. If we go in separately it avoids arguments.'"

Syd Barrett's time in Pink Floyd was all but over by the conclusion of the tour. He was replaced by David Gilmour in early 1968.

Within mere weeks of his arrival in London, Jimi Hendrix's legend was secured. Here was a guitar player that turned the world of rock music on its head and left contemporaries Pete Townshend and Eric Clapton weeping in disbelief at his virtuoso skill.

Despite his 1966 Top 10 hit *Hey Joe*, Hendrix was still largely unknown in the provinces before this tour hit the road, having played very little in his own right outside of London up until then. Something of a misjudgement had also put him on a package tour in early 67, coincidentally also organised by Tito Burns, that placed him alongside The Walker Brothers, Engelbert Humperdinck and Cat Stevens. Needless to say, it was completely the wrong audience. A series of patchy regional club gigs followed but Hendrix was yet to achieve widespread fame.

That, however, changed very rapidly. With the release of two further singles – *Purple Haze* in March and *The Wind Cries Mary* in May – Jimi was rapidly building up momentum. In the months that followed he steadily increased his international following, first in the US and then in Europe. He had turned in an explosive set at the Monterey Pop festival in June that left his co-stars The Who (and most of the audience) completely dumbfounded. It left The Who with little option but to end with a demolition finalé.

Come the tour, Hendrix did not disappoint. A sold-out Royal Albert Hall felt the full force of his set as the Experience powered through *Foxy Lady, Fire* and *The Burning Of The Midnight Lamp*. A preview of the yet to be released *Spanish Castle Magic* was followed by the brief respite of *The Wind Cries Mary*, and the band ended their set with a ferocious *Purple Haze*. This was Hendrix, Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell at their best: a short, snappy, blazing set – a power trio with the world at their feet.

Keith Emerson was blown away: "Everybody involved in the tour, they'd all come back in the wings and watch him because every night he played he'd do something completely different. And a lot of times he astounded Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell, because they didn't always know what he was going to do. He was certainly trashing a lot of speakers. I remember him playing the Flying V guitar for the first time, and he threw it and it actually landed like an arrow into the speaker cabinet, and us backstage watching from the wings were just completely, 'Wow!'"

Hendrix may have been the wild man of rock but he also showed incredible humour and patience for less-than-grateful fans. Keith Emerson recalls a night in Bristol: "At the end of the show I remember a lot of the fans managed to get backstage – the security wasn't very good at all – and they crashed into our dressing room with their autograph books. And of course we were very disturbed about having our privacy invaded like that. I think The Move decided to sign, and then the fans wanted everybody's autograph. And on the way out one of the autograph hunters turned to Jimi and said very loudly, so that we all heard: 'I think Eric Clapton is much better than you.' There was a kind of hushed silence that went over the dressing room. Then Jimi turned back and said quite politely: 'Well, I think Eric's a far better guitar player too.'"

Emerson also recalls the only time there were any bad vibes on the entire tour. "Jimi went a little bit wild swinging his guitar around and he actually managed to hit Mitch Mitchell's bass drum," he says. "Mitch protected his drum set like it was gold, and he was pretty much crying after the show, going: 'You shouldn't have done that! You've got no respect for my drums!' He was really distraught."

The end of the tour also marked the end of an era. The 67 tour is widely regarded as the last of the great pop-rock package tours; a phenomenon that was unique to the times. A decade afterward, Dave Robinson recognised the strength of the format, and modelled the inaugural 1977 Stiff Records package tour on that 67 tour. For a while after this, the idea remained largely forgotten, but it has resurfaced and yet again proved that it has a unique and enduring appeal. The annual travelling musical extravaganzas such as Lollapolooza and Ozzfest, and-one off tours like the recent Alice Cooper/Motörhead/Joan Jett package, can all trace their invention right the way back to the Hendrix package tour of November 1967. Wonder if Lemmy's still carrying his knife…

• *Thanks to Allan Jones, Andy Fairweather-Low, Bev Bevan, Trevor Burton, Henry McCullough, Keith Emerson, Davy O'List, Keith Altham and Dave Robinson.*

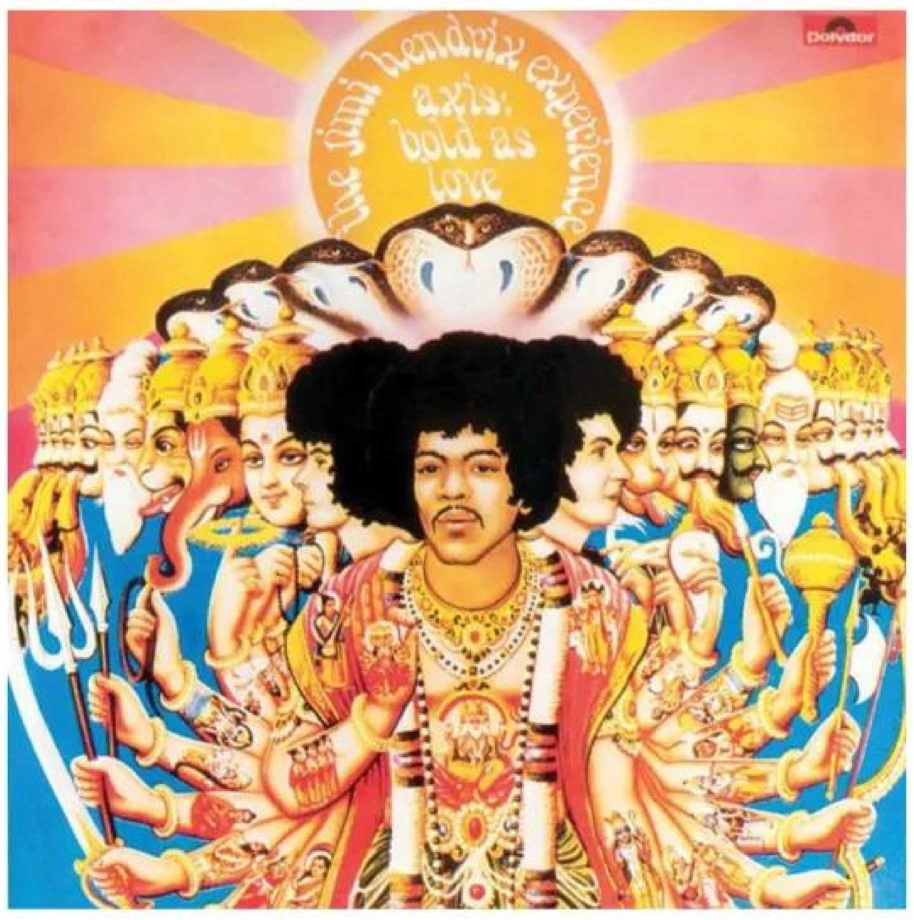
Interstellar Overdrive

Sandwiched between explosive debut *Are You Experienced* and dazzling double album *Electric Ladyland*, Hendrix's "science fiction rock'n'roll" masterpiece *Axis: Bold As Love* is the heart of his Holy Trinity.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

If you were to write a science fiction novel set in the year 1967, it would be hard to imagine a more captivating cosmic messenger than Jimi Hendrix. With a wild afro that looked like a shock of electrical wires, psychedelic duds streaked with hues from the Crab Nebula and a strange language that was part-philosophical rambling, part screaming Stratocaster, he came to London, dropping jaws wherever he went. And since aliens always arrive on earth with a manifesto to help humanity, Hendrix's was called, with futurist bravado, *Axis: Bold As Love*.

He'd already grabbed everyone's attention early that year with his band The Experience's debut *Are You Experienced*. So the second album seemed the ideal vessel for a message. *Axis* was recorded in fits and starts amidst a hectic tour schedule that included over 180 international dates (including package outings with such strange bedfellows like The Monkees and Englebert Humperdinck), many TV appearances, and a landmark appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival. It was seen by Hendrix's manager Chas Chandler and Jimi's labels Track in the UK and Reprise in the US as a quick follow-up release, a way to keep the conversation going with fans and critics. Considering it was followed less than a year later by Jimi's double-album masterwork *Electric Ladyland*, it's not surprising that *Axis* has suffered from a kind of middle child syndrome. But middle children can go to extremes to get attention, and this one often sounded like it was tuned to a radio station on another planet.



Not to belabor the extraterrestrial, but Hendrix even described the album as "science fiction rock 'n' roll," and on the opener *Up From The Skies*, he sings from an alien's point of view: *"I wanna know about the new mother Earth, I wanna hear and see everything."* That fascination was there from his childhood. As a boy, Jimi claimed he saw a UFO, and he was obsessed with TV show *Flash Gordon*, even insisting that his family call him "Buster," after the serial's star Buster Crabbe.

"Science Fiction is about the only thing I read," Hendrix said in 1966. During his globe-trotting 1967, he was devouring genre classics like *Earth Abides* by George Stewart, *Gulf* by Robert A. Heinlein and *Secret Places Of The Lion: Alien Influences On Earth's Destiny* by George Hunt Williamson. All those novels share a common theme of genius secret societies who try to save humanity by improving communication. And Jimi's concept of the "Axis" was similar – a freeway from earth to space to infinity, a "living form of energy, music and love," a way to give people direct feeling and deeper understanding.

Indeed, the lyrics throughout the album often seem as if they're written in some trippy new language, aiming for higher purpose. As he sang on the almost-title track *Bold As Love*: *"Anger he smiles towering shiny metallic purple armour/Queen jealousy, envy waits behind him/Her fiery green gown sneers at the grass ground/Blue are the life giving waters taking for granted."*

Musically, the album is full of textured static, noise blasts and layered guitars processed with ethereal phasing, echo effects and backwards tapes. Hendrix may have just wanted to "wave his freak flag high, high," but the altitude initially bewildered listeners.

"I'm glad there is this kind of reaction," the 24-year old guitarist told the *NME*.

"We've tried to get most of the freaky tracks right into another dimension, like they're coming down out of the heavens."

Jimi Hendrix

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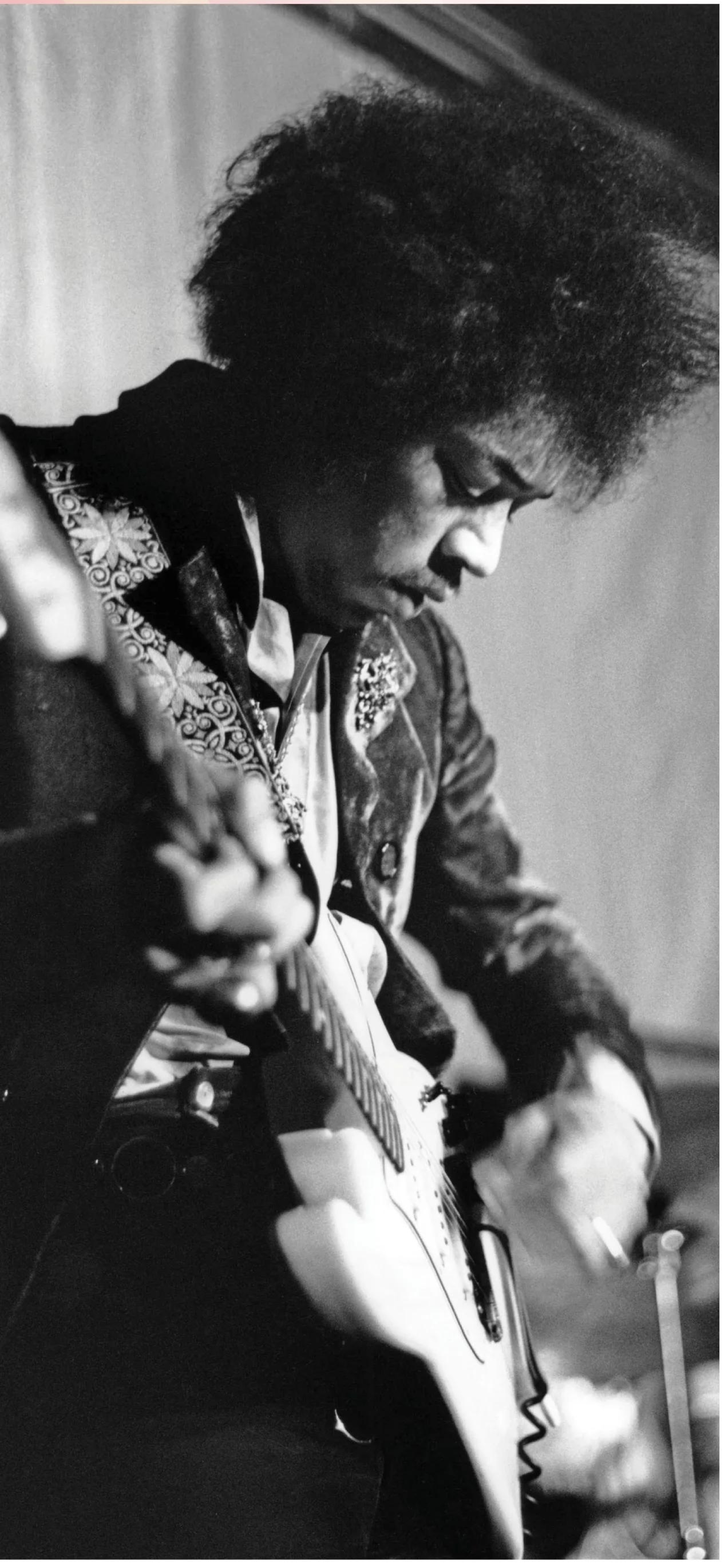
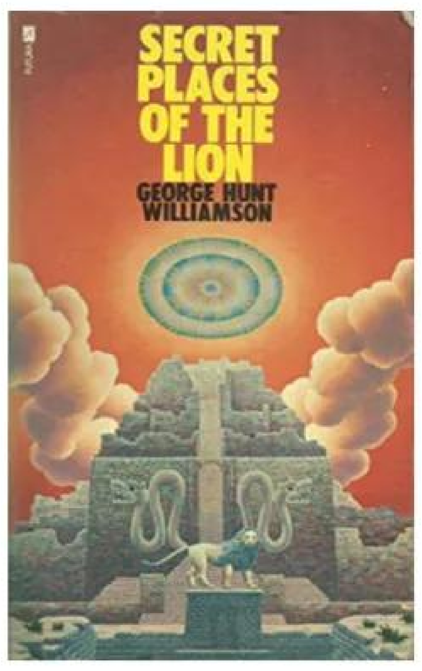
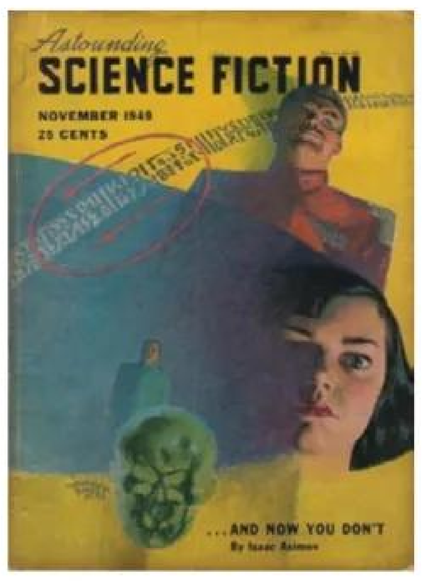
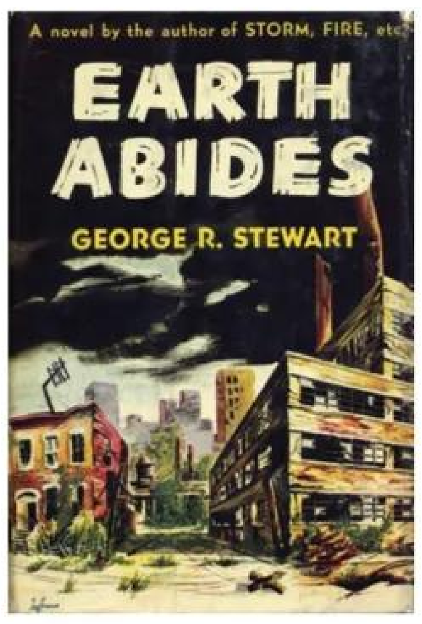








Jimi's book club: some of the sci-fi stories that inspired Axis. Left: Hendrix ponders 'a freeway from earth to space to infinity.'

Are you experienced?: Redding, Hendrix and Mitchell in their psychedlic pomp.

GETTY X2

"Maybe it's a little murky in there, a bit smoky, but it's the kind of disc youput down and go back to. When I first heard Procol Harum's *Whiter Shade Of Pale,* the meaning was very muddy. I understood about the first verse and that was all. But as you hear it again and again you begin to put the thing together. We've tried to get most of the freaky tracks right into another dimension so you get that sky-effect, like they're coming down out of the heavens."

"It took balls to play Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band live. Paul McCartney was there, and he couldn't believe it."

Eddie Kramer

The first sessions for *Axis: Bold As Love* took place at Olympic Sound in early May. Over two nights, with Chas Chandler producing and Eddie Kramer engineering, the Experience cut rough shapes for *If 6 Was 9*, *Up From The Skies, She's So Fine* and four other songs. Kramer gave this writer a glimpse into the trio's creative approach in the studio.

"Everything was a jam first, then he would develop ideas into songs," he said. "That's the genesis of how Jimi worked on every album. Riffing, riffing, riffing, going over stuff with Mitch and Noel, stretching it out, putting other stuff back in, taking stuff out. That was the process."

From constant touring, the trio was mind-meldingly tight, able to leap off into flights of improvised fancy. Nowhere is that more evident than in the track *Bold As Love*, which achieves an almost Sun Ra-like controlled chaos. "There's one point in that song where we're playing three different rhythms at the same time," Noel Redding once said. "Most of those things were worked out in the studio."

Though stakes were high for The Experience, Jimi had ways of keeping things light during sessions. "He was very flippant and acerbic, but very deep and thoughtful too," says Kramer. "He would take the piss out of me and Mitch and Noel. Then he would take the piss out of himself with self-deprecating humor. If we were in the studio, and all of a sudden a track was going south, bam, without even missing a beat, he would launch into *The Batman Theme* or *Peter Gunn* or any of the TV themes that were popular at the time.

There was nothing we wouldn't do, or that we wouldn't want to try for him. The rules were, there were no rules."

Producer Eddie Kramer

Everybody would laugh and relax, then we'd get right back into the song again."

An often-overlooked member of the *Axis* team was Roger Mayer. Jimi nicknamed him "The Valve" (after an amplifier vacuum tube) and praised Mayer as "their secret weapon." By day an acoustic engineer for British Admiralty, he was a classic boffin - pasty complexion, lank hair, brilliant mind. He'd already invented fuzz boxes and effects pedals for Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck. But after being "blown away" by Jimi's performance at the Bag O'Nails, Mayer dedicated himself almost exclusively to helping the guitarist realize the far-out tones that floated through his mind.

"Both Jimi and I had synaesthesia, where we would see colours in sound," Mayer told *Music Radar* in 2017. "We found that fascinating. It's a useful ability as a sound designer. I was very interested in new sounds for guitars. We would talk about the vision of the sound. For instance: 'This sounds like what you see when you hold two mirrors in front of each other.' And that notion became The Octavia pedal." ⊳

As the name of that pedal suggested, Mayer was a fellow sci-fi enthusiast. "The sounds of the record could be thought of as bunch of disks floating in space in front of you, like flying saucers with sounds coming from them and they're moving around," he recalled. "And the song *Castles Made Of Sand* was partly inspired by some of the books we were reading, like *Dune* by Frank Herbert. It's a science fiction kind of fantasy, but really down to earth in a way. Jimi was very good at depicting imagery that people could relate to, but with a bit of a cosmic twist to it, you know?"

While the spacey sounds burbled through *Castles…*, *You Got Me Floatin'* and *If 6 Was 9*, the most perfect blend of extraterrestrial and earthly was on *Little Wing*, surely one of Jimi's greatest songs. Of the inspiration for the latter ballad, he said: "I figured that I take everything I see around, and put it maybe in the form of a girl and call it 'Little Wing,' and then it will just fly away."

He later told his brother Leon that the song was about their mother Lucille. Whoever the subject, more than half a century and countless spins on, it's still breathtaking and fathoms deep.

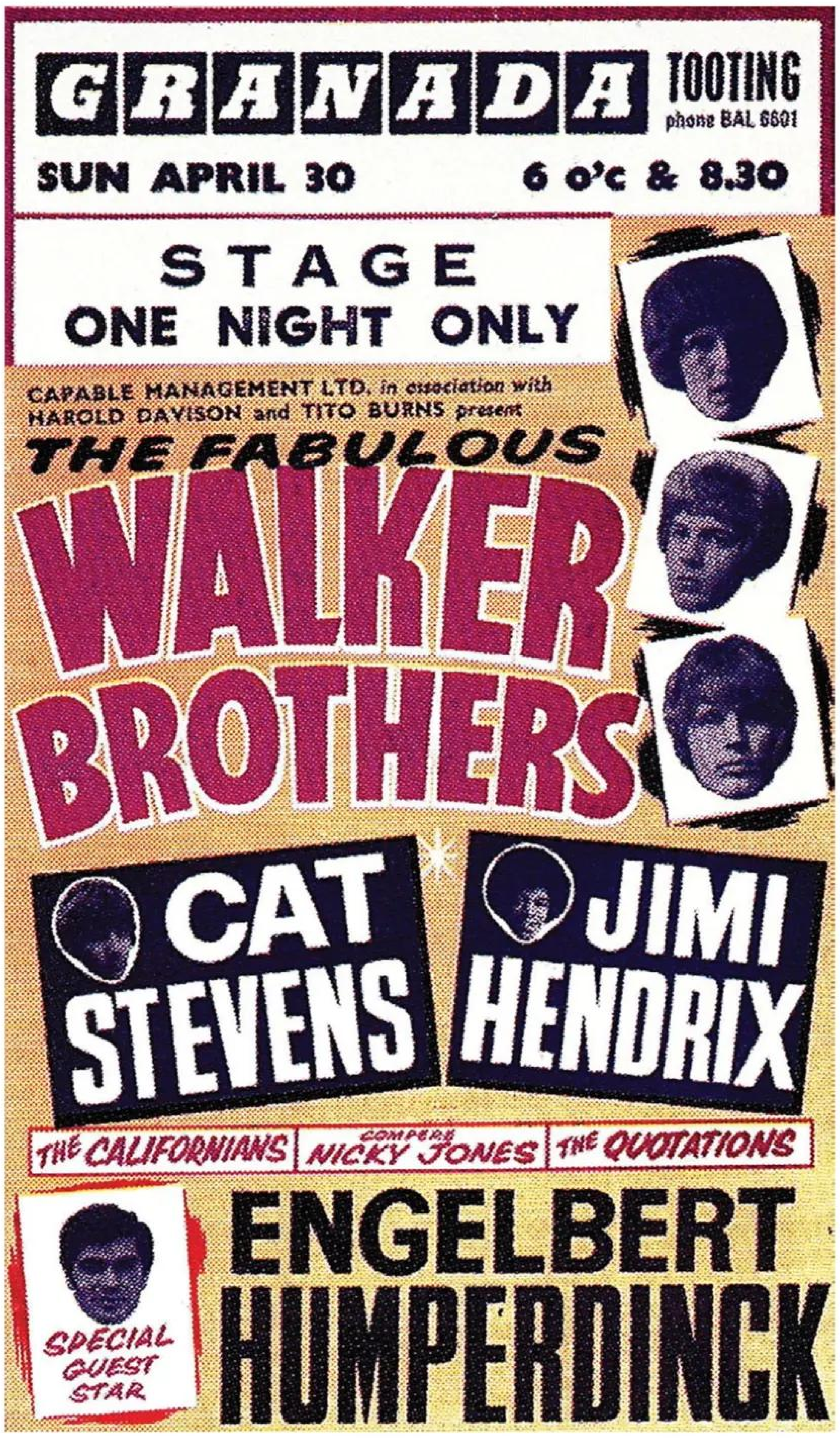
Those hammered Curtis Mayfield-style guitar chords, the mystical lyric, the tender vocal, the swirling aria-like solo.

"His rhythm guitar playing on that was stupendous," says Kramer. "His sense of timing was always immaculate. Even when Mitch was floating the beat around like a jazz cat. His ability to be able to play lead and rhythm at the same time. If you isolate the rhythm guitar track on anything by Jimi, you'll always get the whole essence of the song wrapped up in one performance."

Recording continued on the trio's rare off-days through the summer, bookended by more touring and two noteworthy shows. On June 4, at the Saville Theater, Hendrix opened his set with a roaring cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, complete with a feedback-laden solo. The Experience had learned it backstage 30 minutes before going on. Jimi spun the record on his portable player for Noel and Mitch and said, "We're starting with this."

"It took balls to do that," Kramer says. "Paul McCartney was there, and he couldn't believe it. The record had just come out that week." Though Hendrix admired many of his musical contemporaries, he held Dylan and The Beatles in highest regard. And the experimentalism of *Pepper* definitely inspired him to push his own boundaries on *Axis*.

The other highlight was the Monterey Pop Festival, where The Experience stole the show from The Who and The Grateful Dead , making their first major impact in the US. Jimi, in antique military coat and feather boa, pulled out all of his tricks, playing with his teeth, behind his back and between his legs, coaxing out a joyous electric maelstrom before the 90,000 people. Noel Redding summed it up: "We destroyed the place. We just nailed it. That made the band in America."



When Hendrix met Humperdinck: the poster for that unlikely package tour.

In the midst of the touring and sessions for *Axis*, there was a curious episode that illuminates something essential about Jimi's nature. In August, on a two-day break in New York City, he met up with his old bandmate, singer-guitarist Curtis Knight. Hendrix played Knight some rough mixes from the album. "I'm really getting into something now," the guitarist said.

The pair wanted to go out to dinner, but Hendrix was broke. Knight suggested that Jimi might borrow some money from Ed Chalpin, the producer/label owner who in 1965 signed Jimi to a contract with a one-dollar advance, then later tried to sue him

"Jimi was very flippant and acerbic, but very deep and thoughtful too. He would take the piss out of me and Mitch and Noel and himself."

Eddie Kramer

In search of space: the Experience live at the BBC in 1967.

GETTY X3

to stop the first Experience album from coming out. The three had a late-night dinner, and then incredibly, Jimi went to the studio with Chalpin and cut six songs. "You can't put my name on these," he told the producer.

Chalpin later said Jimi was friendly that night, with no mention of the legal battles from the year before. What's clear from this incident is that first, Jimi always lived in the moment, and when the moment was about music, any business considerations and complications simply went out the window. The resulting tangled webs, coupled with his impulsive, freewheeling nature, would come back to haunt him constantly through his brief life. Jimi wasn't naive. But he was always a creator first, and a businessman third.

"There were two sides there," says Kramer. "Jimi was savvy about what was going on, but he also had a big heart."

He could also be a bit absent-minded. It seems the making of every classic record includes some narrowly avoided mishap. As *Axis* neared the finish line in October, Jimi lost the master reel of mixes for Side One, leaving it in the back seat of a London taxi. Chandler and Kramer had to remix the entire seven-song sequence from scratch overnight. But they couldn't match their lost mix of *If 6 Was 9*. Noel Redding had a well-worn, crinkled backup tape, which Kramer had to press flat inch by inch with an iron.

For the album's iconic gatefold sleeve, Track and Reprise decided that, unlike their debut album, there would be one cover design for the UK and US. They latched onto the Indian craze that was buzzing sympathetically through the music scene in '67. Thanks to The Beatles association with Ravi Shankar and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, sitars and day-glo Nehru jackets were everywhere. A black and white photo of The Experience, snapped by Kal Ferris, was rendered by painter Roger Law over top an iconic Hindu religious work called *Viraat Purushan-Vishnuroopam*.

While Jimi appreciated the bright colours and many-beings-as-one concept, he didn't like the cover initially. "You got it wrong, I'm not that kind of Indian," he said, wishing they'd honored his own Cherokee roots. Nevertheless, it has become one of the most reproduced images of the '60s, gracing shirts, posters and memorabilia.

"It gets tiring doing the same thing. In this life, you gotta do what you want, you gotta let your mind and fancy flow free."

Jimi Hendrix

The album, which cost a whopping £10,000 to make – including £3,000 for the cover alone – was released on December 1, 1967. Critical reaction was mixed. "Uneven in quality" said *Rolling Stone*. "A vivid listening experience" was the measured take from *Record Mirror*. Meanwhile, *Melody Maker* (who said, "Amaze your ears, boggle your mind") and *NME* ("It's the answer in how you might convey colour to a blind man") seemed to grasp the album's questing sci-fi spirit. While it went Top 5 in the UK and US, the jazzy lead single *Up From The Skies* failed to chart.

Though the labels and Chas Chandler were surely displeased with the lack of singles, it had the effect of subtly freeing Hendrix from the pop treadmill. Noel Redding would soon leave the band to pursue his own career with Fat Mattress, while Mitch Mitchell stuck around for another year. The only permanent members of the creative team for the next three years were Roger Mayer and Eddie Kramer. "There was nothing we wouldn't do, or that we wouldn't want to try for him," Kramer said. "The rules were, there were no rules."

And so *Axis*, for all its middle child status, not only deserves more attention for its music and artistic merit, but for how it played the essential role of switching Jimi onto a course of exploration rather than pop star repetition. As he told the *New York Times* in 1968: "It's a different record. Like I do one thing and they say: 'That's good – that's great.' Then I say, 'Well, how about this then?' and they say, 'Yeah, that's a number one,' so I do something else. I'm trying to get new things all the time.

"We'll keep moving. It gets tiring doing the same thing, coming out and saying, 'Now we'll play this song,' and 'Now we'll play that one.' People take us strange ways, but I don't care how they take us. Man, we'll be moving. In this life, you gotta do what you want, you gotta let your mind and fancy flow, flow, flow free."

FLY ON THE WALL

Sorting myth from fact

Jimi Hendrix jams with Jim Morrison

When the guitar icon met The Doors singer in a small New York club, the on-stage jamming soon turned into a full-on, bottle-breaking brawl – thanks to Janis Joplin.

Words: **Johnny Black**

The late 60s was the dawn of the era of the superstar collaboration. But for every Blind Faith or Crosby, Stills & Nash there were a dozen drunken on-stage jams featuring rock'n'roll's biggest stars that have slipped down the back of the sofa of history.

One of the most infamous was the fleeting union between Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison on stage at hip New York club Steve Paul's The Scene in the spring of 1968, while Janis Joplin looked on. Peace and love wasn't on the agenda when what should have been a supreme meeting of minds disintegrated into a chaotic brawl that ended with Joplin smashing a bottle on Morrison's head.

Wild child: a "lewd and crude" Morrison was at the heart of the fight.

Lester Chambers (vocalist, The Chambers Brothers): We were the house band at the Cheetah club, just a few blocks away on Broadway. When we finished at the Cheetah we would walk over to the Steve Paul Scene. You would come in off the street, go down four or five steps and you were in the club. It was a small space, maybe a hundred people at the most, so you got to mingle with whoever was there: John Lennon, Johnny Winter, Buddy Miles; if Janis Joplin was in town she'd be there; Al Kooper of the Blues Project was down there a lot.

Al Kooper (guitarist/organist the Blues Project): When the late shows finished, the waitresses would begin their clean-ups, and the participants of that night's jams would gather in the dressing rooms. The unknowing, paying customers would settle their bills and set out for the suburbs, and then the action would begin. We'd slowly come out, like bats in the night, and take over the stage.

Lester Chambers: You could only get about six people comfortably on that stage. If it got too crowded, sometimes musicians would take up a little area in front of the stage or at the side.

Al Kooper: Hendrix loved this. He would show up more often than not, always with his guitar and his trusty Nagra [reel-to-reel tape recorder] in tow. He would fastidiously set up the Nagra next to him and record every jam he participated in.

Danny Fields (publicist, Elektra Records): I was working for Elektra, which meant I was working for Jim Morrison, but he and I didn't get along. In my professional capacity I kept an eye on where Jim was, because wherever he was there would be trouble. I knew he was at The Scene that night, and Jimi was always there. And I was a teenage boy who worshipped Janis, so I knew she was there as well.

Sam Andrew (guitarist, Big Brother And The Holding Company): We spent many nights at The Scene, whenever we were playing in New York. They were just jamming that night on tunes that everyone knew in common, especially blues. I almost never sit in on things like that because it's really hard to get the right sound if you're going through an unfamiliar amp and everything.

> **"Janis stepped in and hit Jim over the head with the bottle – then she poured her drink all over him."**
> **Danny Fields**

Lester Chambers: The band that night, as I remember it, included Randy Hobbs, Bobby Peterson and Randy Zehringer, all from The McCoys. I can't remember anybody else on guitar, but usually when Jimi went up to play guitar nobody else did.

Michael J Weber (audience member): When Morrison showed up he was very intoxicated, God knows on what, and he was slurring, very stoned. Jim was an ornery character when he wanted to be. He was very in-your-face. But everybody was at that time. Jimi was very different from Morrison. He had a lovely vibe about him. He was very shy and reserved. He was the same soft-spoken guy when he talked to women. Morrison was very abrupt, he said whatever he wanted to say.

Sam Andrew: Jim swaggered over to where Janis and me were sitting and, without any provocation at all, he just yanked her hair down to the floor. She was already very jaundiced about him, so then she hit him with a bottle of Southern Comfort, broke it. It was almost like a Vaudeville act.

Danny Fields: Janis's hatred of Morrison, I don't know where it started. But if you mentioned

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Scene stealer: Hendrix was a regular at jam sessions at New York club Steve Paul's The Scene.

Jim's name she would say: "That asshole." She was not going to put up with what she thought was his childish, disgusting, rude behaviour, wherever she encountered it. It riled her. She was past giving him a chance.

Lester Chambers: When Morrison got onto the stage, his voice was heard. He made a couple of "Oh-wow-wooooh" kind of noises. He was so drunk he had to hold on to the mic stand, and every once in a while, he'd go: "Oooooooh! Waughhhhhh! Awoweee!" At one point, Jimi said: "Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard the sound of Jim Morrison."

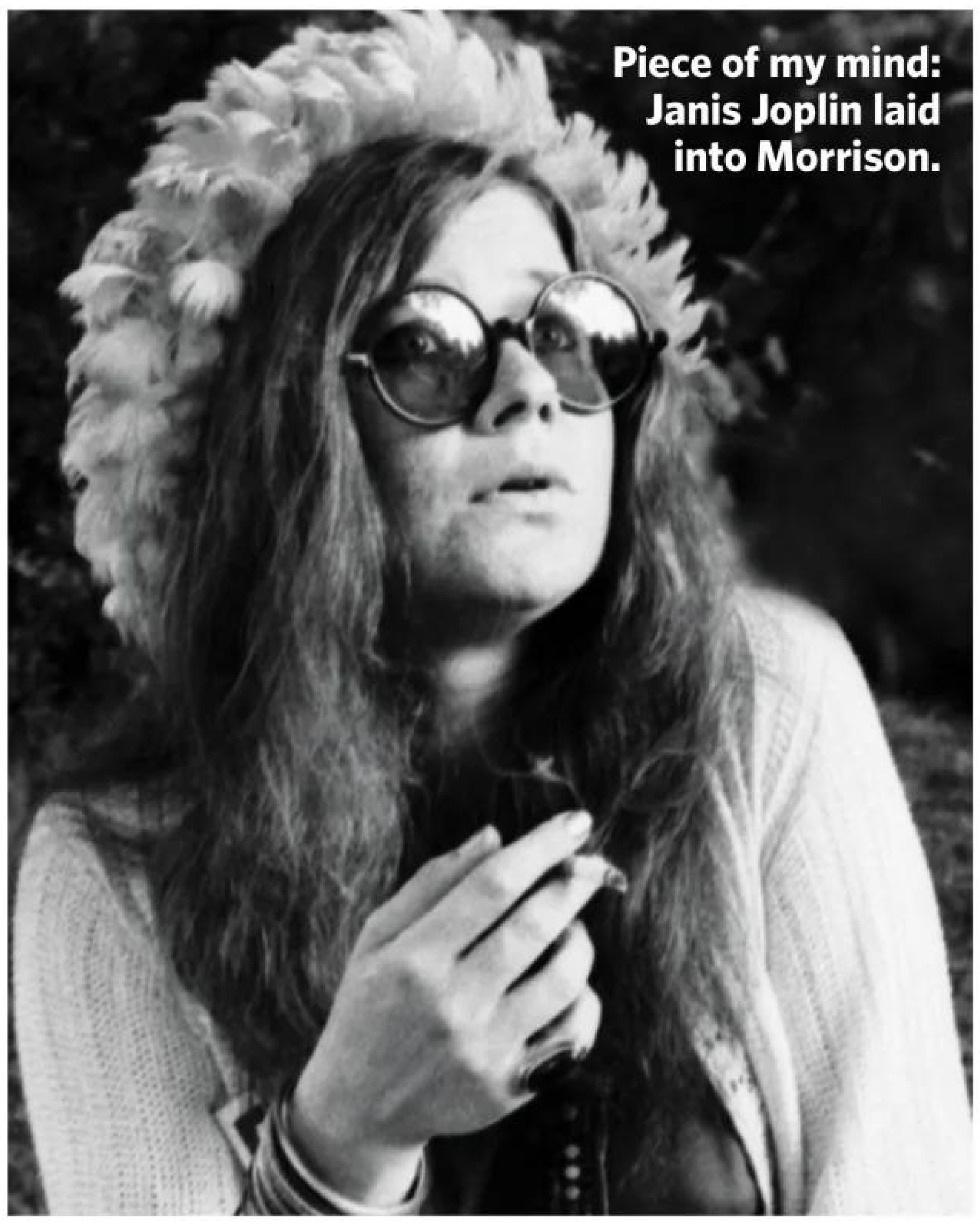
Rick Derringer (guitarist, The McCoys): Jimi recorded the whole scene between him and Jim Morrison. Jimi was playing and he was recording himself that night in a jamming situation. He had one of his hats on that he used to wear, that little cowboy hat kind of thing.

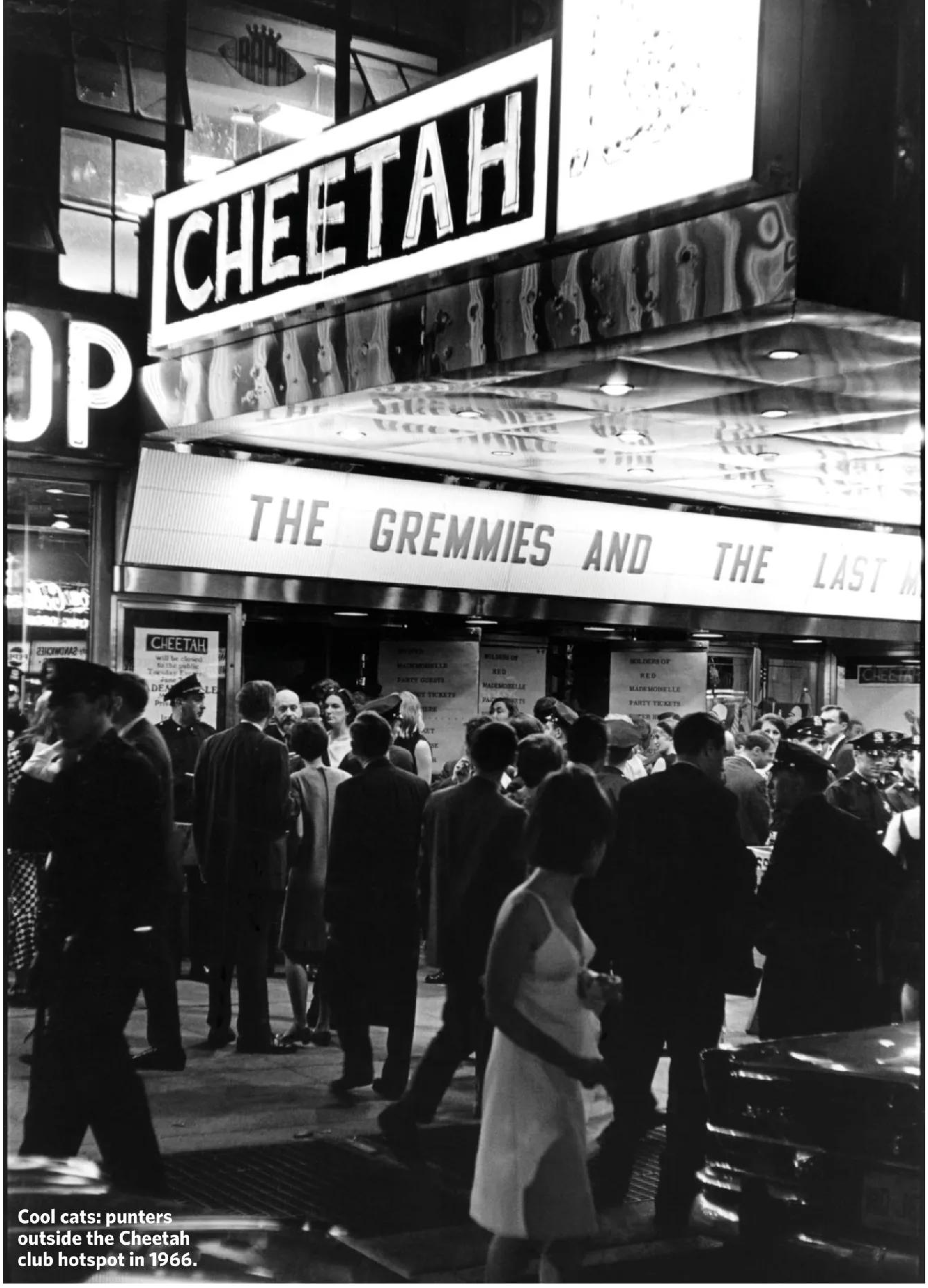
Michael J Weber: Jimi was already playing when Morrison got down on his knees and started giving Jimi like this mock blow job. He was being very lewd and crude.

Danny Fields: So Morrison has his arms wrapped round Jimi's legs and he's still screaming: "I wanna suck your cock!" He was very loud. And Hendrix was still attempting to play. Morrison wouldn't let go. It was a tasteless exhibition of scene-stealing – something Morrison was really into. To top it all off, Janis, who had been sitting in the back of the room, saw this happening and suddenly appeared at the edge of the stage with a bottle in one hand and her drink in the other.

Sam Andrew: I didn't actually see Morrison kneeling down in from of Jimi, but Janis had this real righteous sense of when someone was taking advantage of someone else, or trying to steal the show, which Morrison was. She would become like a schoolteacher all of a sudden, and felt she had to step in to teach someone how to behave.

Danny Fields: Janis stepped in and hit Jim over the head with the bottle, then she poured her drink over him. The three of them started grabbing and rolling all over the floor in a writhing heap


Piece of my mind: Janis Joplin laid into Morrison.



Cool cats: punters outside the Cheetah club hotspot in 1966.

of hysteria. I swear there was, like, fur flying, like a cloud of dust around them, as if they were in a dry river bed. They were in a tangle of broken glass, dust and guitars. A lot of dust and feathers and leathers and satins went flying around.

Sam Andrew: I think Janis was just trying to tell him to stop being an ass. If he'd got up and sang a song, that'd have been fine, but we were there to listen to Jimi and he was stopping us from enjoying it.

Danny Fields: Naturally it ended up in all three of them being carried out. Morrison was the most seriously hurt. They all had minders and roadies, and there were guys from the club whose job was to help keep order. Janis's guys went straight in there to help her, no questions asked, just get them apart, get them out of there and back to the hotel. Jimi was part of the family at The Scene, so the club guys would wade in to help him, and Morrison had been sending off danger signals from the moment he got there. He was behaving like someone from the sewers.

Lester Chambers: I don't remember the fight between Jimi and Jim. I heard they had an argument, but the club was real small and very hot. It didn't have any air-conditioning, so you would step outside to get some air and cool down.

Lester Chambers: It didn't stop the music. After Jim and Janis were gone we just kept on playing.

Danny Fields: After The Scene closed at four am, people would move on to Steve's funny little house in Chelsea. People would sit around and listen to albums and then, eventually, everybody would disperse, and there was an all-night coffee house across the street where you'd often find Jimi sitting with a peaceful cup of coffee at five or six am.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
The Scene closed its doors 18 months after the disastrous Hendrix/Morrison/Joplin dust-up, victim of one too many unfriendly visits from local gangsters. The final show, featuring Sha Na Na, turned into a full-scale riot. Rick Derringer of The McCoys went on to bigger things, notching up a string of solo hits in the 70s. On September 18, 1970 Jimi Hendrix died in London after choking on his own vomit. Within 10 months, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison were also dead. All three were 27 years old.

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BLAZE OF GLORY

Hendrix was an unknown quantity in the US when he arrived to play the Monterey Pop Festival. One incendiary performance later, he emerged a fully-fledged superstar…

By the summer of 1967, Jimi Hendrix was a rising star in the UK, but his home country was slower to catch on. On June 18, he played the Monterey Pop Festival with The Experience – his first US appearance in more than two years. The band's set – culminating with Hendrix memorably setting fire to his guitar during a cover of *Wild Thing* – was not just the highlight of the festival, but one of the defining moments of the era. Here, some of the people who were there look back on the point Hendrix ascended to godhead…

Mitch Mitchell (Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer): For Jimi, Monterey was so special. He was going back home with a band he felt was something special.

DA Pennebaker (documentary maker): At that time he was not known in America. John Phillips of the Mamas & The Papas had told me about him and said, "This is a guy who plays blues and sets himself on fire." [laughs] I said, "That's the kind of blues I guess I've never heard.

Mitch Mitchell: We knew The Who were going to be a tough act to follow. Nobody would want to follow The Who on stage – they were just so great – but having said that we had faith in ourselves and felt we had something good too.

Micky Dolenz (The Monkees): I'm sitting there watching all these great acts at the festival – Ravi Shankar, The Who, The Byrds, Buffalo Springfield… The announcer said: "Here we have the Jimi Hendrix Experience!" Out come these three guys looking really cool, like circus performers wearing very psychedelic outfits. They start playing and I did a double-take when Jimi started playing guitar with his teeth. I said to whoever I was with, "There's that guitar player that plays with his teeth!" I recognised him from seeing him in a little club in New York City.

David Crosby (The Byrds): As flamboyant as Jimi was on stage, he was shy and quiet in person. He wasn't at all like the figure you saw up on there on a stage. But if one of his hands could touch the guitar, Lord have mercy! Because you just didn't want to get in the way. He was spectacular. I remember watching him play Foxy Lady at Monterey and it was almost too fucking good.

Al Kooper: I met Jimi at a sound check at Monterey where I was the stage manager. He invited me to play with him that night on Like A Rolling Stone, but I had to turn him down because I was working, and [promoter] Lou Adler would have got very mad at me if I'd ducked out. You don't want to fuck with Lou Adler. Every inch of me wanted to do it.

Micky Dolenz: I remember just being bewildered and in awe of his musicianship but also impressed by the showmanship because it was a very theatrical sort of performance. Like with The Who smashing guitars and drums.

Mitch Mitchell: Monterey wasn't the first time that Jimi had burned his guitar. The first was at Finsbury Park Astoria in London.

Keith Altham (publicist): I came up with the burning guitar idea in England because Chas asked me what he could do to steal the headlines on the Engelbert Humperdinck-Walker Brothers-Hendrix package tour. It worked. And Jimi was not undyingly grateful as a blazing conflagration was expected of him on every performance. And as he said to me before going on stage at Monterey: "I got an idea Keith – why don't you set fire to your typewriter tonight for a change?"

Micky Dolenz: After the show, Jimi and a couple of other guys were in the one of the tents jamming until the wee hours of the morning on the last night. I was there watching all of that go down and remember being in awe.

Mitch Mitchell: It really changed everything for us. We had nothing at all after Monterey, not one gig planned. But after Monterey we got loads of offers: the Fillmore, the Hollywood Bowl with the Mamas & The Papas, who were just terrific to us. It was really the start of everything.

Right: the climax of Hendrix's Monterey set. Below: The Experience in action.

RIGHT: ED CARAEFF/GETTY IMAGES
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

AND THE GODS MADE LOVE

In 1968, Jimi Hendrix hit his sky-kissing peak on *Electric Ladyland* – a double album that detonated the guitar scene. With fresh testimony from engineer Eddie Kramer, this is the story of the riffs, drugs, fights and late nights that set the world's greatest guitarist on the road to destruction…

Interview: **Simon Young** Words: **Henry Yates**

GETTY

Three albums. That's all it took Jimi Hendrix to reinvent the electric guitar, dethrone the ruling elite and book his place astride just about every Best Guitarist poll ever published. Four years. That's all Jimi Hendrix had, from the moment he touched down at Heathrow on 24 September 1966, to the night he died tragically at the age of just 27. Although Jimi was staggeringly prolific, the closest things he had to rivals – Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck – would all go on to dwarf his output. And yet, the reality is that the man on your hipster t-shirt – electric-shock afro, vintage flea-market jacket, joint in one ridiculously talented hand – would probably still be the leader of the pack, even if he'd only given us Electric Ladyland.

Hendrix never made a dud album. In 1967, *Are You Experienced* was the opening gunshot and *Axis: Bold As Love* the space-age sonic thrill-ride, but in the desert island scenario, you'd have to choose the double album that outraged UK retailers when it shipped in October 1968 in a sleeve covered in naked ladies. *Electric Ladyland* is both Jimi at his sky-kissing peak and the start of the nosedive.

Look beyond the six-string heroics on these 16 tracks and you can smell the trouble to come: the dissolution of his circle of trust, the heroin, the fading chops and the car-crash final gigs. This is the magnum opus – but also the moment it all started to crumble. ➤

It's the way he tells 'em: the Experience with Traffic's Dave Mason.

Tune in, freak out: Hendrix in the middle of revolutionising rock'n'roll.

GETTY X2

Virtually all the key players involved with this album are dead now: Hendrix, manager/producer Chas Chandler, Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding. For this feature, we scored an interview with the one principal who isn't. Veteran South African engineer Eddie Kramer was the closest thing Hendrix had to a sonic wingman, and remains patently in awe of *Electric Ladyland*. "Can anyone replicate him?" Kramer grins at one point. "I have a quick answer to that. There's no f**king way. You'll end up in a loony bin, because it's just impossible to duplicate what he did…"

Hendrix made the impossible look like business as usual. Slapped in contractual handcuffs upon his arrival in London, the guitarist had already cranked out two classic albums inside one calendar year at the orders of his UK record label, and in late 1967, sessions for a third began at the low-tech Olympic Studios in Barnes, West London. With Chandler at the desk, future hit singles*All Along The Watchtower* and *Crosstown Traffic* got early run-outs, but Hendrix was now a big fish in search of a pond to match, and by April 1968, *Electric Ladyland* – along with his arsenal of Strats and Marshall stacks – had relocated to New York's gleaming 16-track Record Plant.

No doubt, the choice of city was significant. It was here that the pre-fame guitarist had scraped for peanuts on the blacks-only chitlin' circuit. Now, he returned as an untouchable rock god, and lord of a boutique studio where he finally had the tools and budget to realise the magic in his head. "If he wanted to jam for 18 minutes, then he would," recalls Kramer. "This was his expression totally, without any restrictions."

Hendrix worked to his own timetable, described material in terms of colours and shapes, and was frequently stoned on the job, but none of that is to imply the guitarist was slapdash in his studio approach. "The whole LP means so much," the guitarist explained in one archive video interview. "It wasn't just slopped together. Every little thing on there means something. It's not a little game we're playing."

"Have you seen his notes for that album?" picks up Kramer. "It's like a master plan. On the console, there'd be all these bits and pieces of paper: hotel stationery, backs of envelopes, book of matches… he would lay them all out and assemble it on this legal pad, and this was the final assembly. It may seem a freewheeling sort of album, but it's a concept in Jimi's head. This was a highly centrally organised human being… and probably the greatest guitar player I've ever had the privilege of working with."

It's a bold statement for an engineer who's tracked alongside Jimmy Page, Keith Richards and Santana, but the ear-popping material on the four sides of Electric Ladyland backs it up. Scribbled in the back of the limo after a Miami festival set was rained off, *Rainy Day, Dream Away* was a dreamy vamp in D that burst into a wah climax. *Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland)* saw Hendrix bolster his parts with backwards guitar and licks played through a Leslie speaker. *House Burning Down* was a chunky stomper written about the LA race riots of 1965, which ended with a rapid panning effect that made the guitar sound like a growling wild cat (or maybe a Black Panther?). As Chandler was later to note on Eagle Rock's *Classic Albums* DVD: "The rule was, there were no rules."

And those are just the comparitively lesser-known numbers. Three tracks in, *Electric Ladyland* drops its first bona fide jukebox moment on the spring-heeled *Crosstown Traffic*, with Jimi doubling his guitar line by blowing on a cellophane-wrapped comb for a kazoo effect, and showcasing his hybrid lead/rhythm technique honed on the R&B circuit.

" Every little thing means something. It's not a game we're playing"

Hendrix on 'Electric Ladyland'

"It was lead, but it was rhythm," Chandler noted. "He had these great big hands. He could do it all."

Wrapping up side two, *Burning Of The Midnight Lamp* is a psychedelic classic, not just notable for the opening wobble played by Jimi on harpsichord, but for the trilling effect that sounds like a mandolin (which was actually a guitar recorded at a tape speed of 7.5ips, then played back at 15ips). "One has to remember that Jimi was the master of invention," says Kramer. "The game was on, so whatever you wanted to do to make the sound right – do it!"

Then came two flashes of black magic. Of the two tracks that (almost) share their names, the straight blues of *Voodoo Chile* was nailed when Hendrix rolled back from the Big Apple clubs with Jefferson Airplane bassist Jack Casady and Blind Faith keys man Steve Winwood, and wordlessly nailed the take as the sun came up.

"I remember Jimi played a white Fender Strat on that song," Kramer told the Guitar Center website. "Surprisingly, the amp he used on that was not a Marshall stack. It was actually a Fender Showman top with a huge cabinet with eight 10-inch speakers. You can hear it rumbling around on the floor of the Record Plant [at] the beginning of the song."

The following day, *Voodoo Chile* became the jump-off to a moment of even greater genius, as an ABC crew visited the studio and the Experience jammed an offshoot – *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* – for the cameras. Again, counters Kramer, Hendrix's wah-powered signature tune wasn't quite as spontaneous as he made out: "People don't really understand how prepared he was. Now, on a jam, like *Voodoo Child*, for weeks he had been thinking about it, and he even had a legal yellow pad with notes."

HEY JOE!

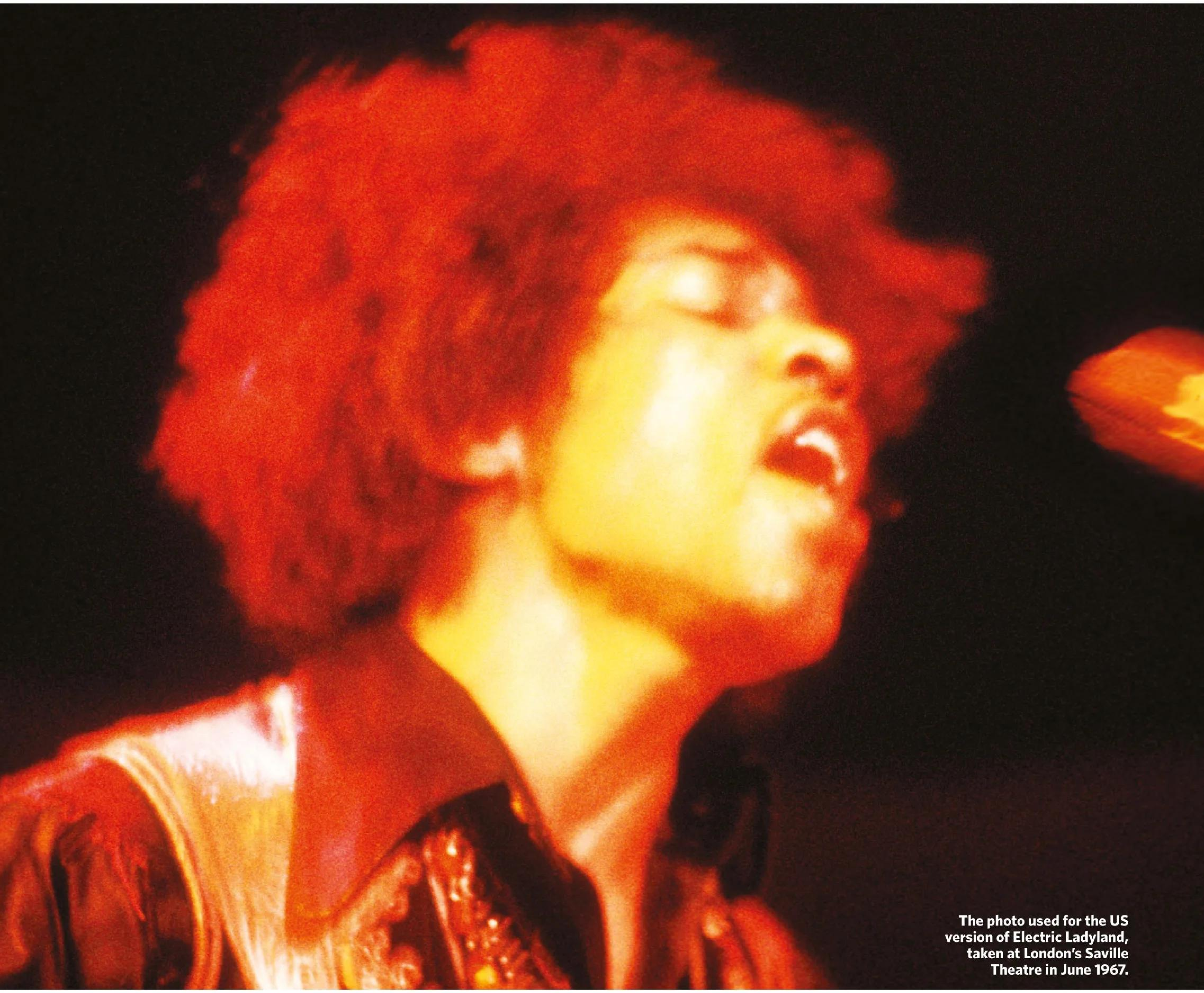
JOE SATRIANI CHOOSES HIS THREE FAVOURITE HENDRIX MOMENTS

LITTLE WING
"It's hard to imagine something more beautiful. It's so melodic, like some sort of futuristic R&B guitar style, and it never needs to be played the same way twice. It's very 60s-sounding, the chord progression, but somehow he transcends it. And that was his thing: he transcended the convention of guitar playing. He always sounded like he never practised a thing in his life, but everything he played was like something you couldn't copy."

VOODOO CHILD (SLIGHT RETURN)
"That whole performance is so amazing. Just the fact that he thought he could start a song like that. I don't know if he realised, like, coming over a car radio or a stereo system back in the late 60s, the impact that would have in somebody's living room; that suddenly there would be this wah-wah guitar, like it was right in front of your face."

MACHINE GUN
"You look at that period and there's *Sunshine Of Your Love* and there's this, and they're very close. [This] is laid-back and groovy, and when it starts the song, it has the structure to it, but then, bam, the song just opens up into this thing that's the Bible of all electric guitar playing. If you want to deal with a Stratocaster, you have to see everything he did in this one live performance one night. That's what we're all working on…"

Hendrix's forensic preparations also extended to tone. "It depended on what Jimi was going for," explains Kramer. "He was the master of tone and volume, wherever he had set the Marshall, or whatever amp he was using, even if it was set on stun, way past 11. *Voodoo Child* was a completely different approach: live on the floor, no overdubs, using a Fender Bassman top and a Showman bottom with eight 10s in it. Quite a boomy sound? Yes, but very essential for the type of song he was going for, which was a bluesy ▷



The photo used for the US version of Electric Ladyland, taken at London's Saville Theatre in June 1967.

thing. Or there are other tracks where the Marshall was set on 10, but then he uses his volume control, either on the guitar or with some kind of pedal, to adjust the volume. There's always room for him to crank. The technique is just to make sure you don't overload the mic preamps!"

Hendrix's pioneering use of nascent effects pedals – chiefly the Vox wah, Octavia, Uni-Vibe and Fuzz Face – has been well explored, but Kramer reveals that many of the wilder sounds were added in post-production. "It's fairly common knowledge what he used in the studio. The Octavia, wah and distortion pedal were the three weapons of choice. So, beyond that, once the basic sound was created, it was up to me to do whatever I did to alter the sound. We sprinkled a lot of fairy dust on what Jimi was doing. Because he had such marvellous sounds, there wasn't much you could do to it, but when he came into the control room to hear what I'd done after he'd cut the tracks, he was always big smiles. He loved the fact I took chances with his sound and enhanced it, made it bigger or fatter, put delays on, tried different EQ, compression or reverb… anything to make it sound a bit bigger.

> **"Mixing was a shared experience. It was Jimi and I mixing together"**
>
> **Eddie Kramer**

"Was Jimi involved at the mixing stage?" echoes Kramer. "Oh, yes, it was more a question of: we record the tracks, he comes in, he listens, we overdubbed, and we finally finish the track. When it came to mixing, it was a shared experience, because there was no automation in those days – it was Jimi and I mixing together. I'd give Jimi very specific faders [to ride], we'd lay the whole thing out, rehearse a few times and then go straight to tape."

Arguably, no track was a greater cocktail of chops and sonics than *All Along The Watchtower*. In the hands of its author, Bob Dylan, this had been a no-thrills album track on 1967's *John Wesley Harding*, but the following year, Hendrix ripped it emphatically from his grasp. Minted at Olympic and finished off

The Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1968: *Electric Ladyland* would be their last album together.

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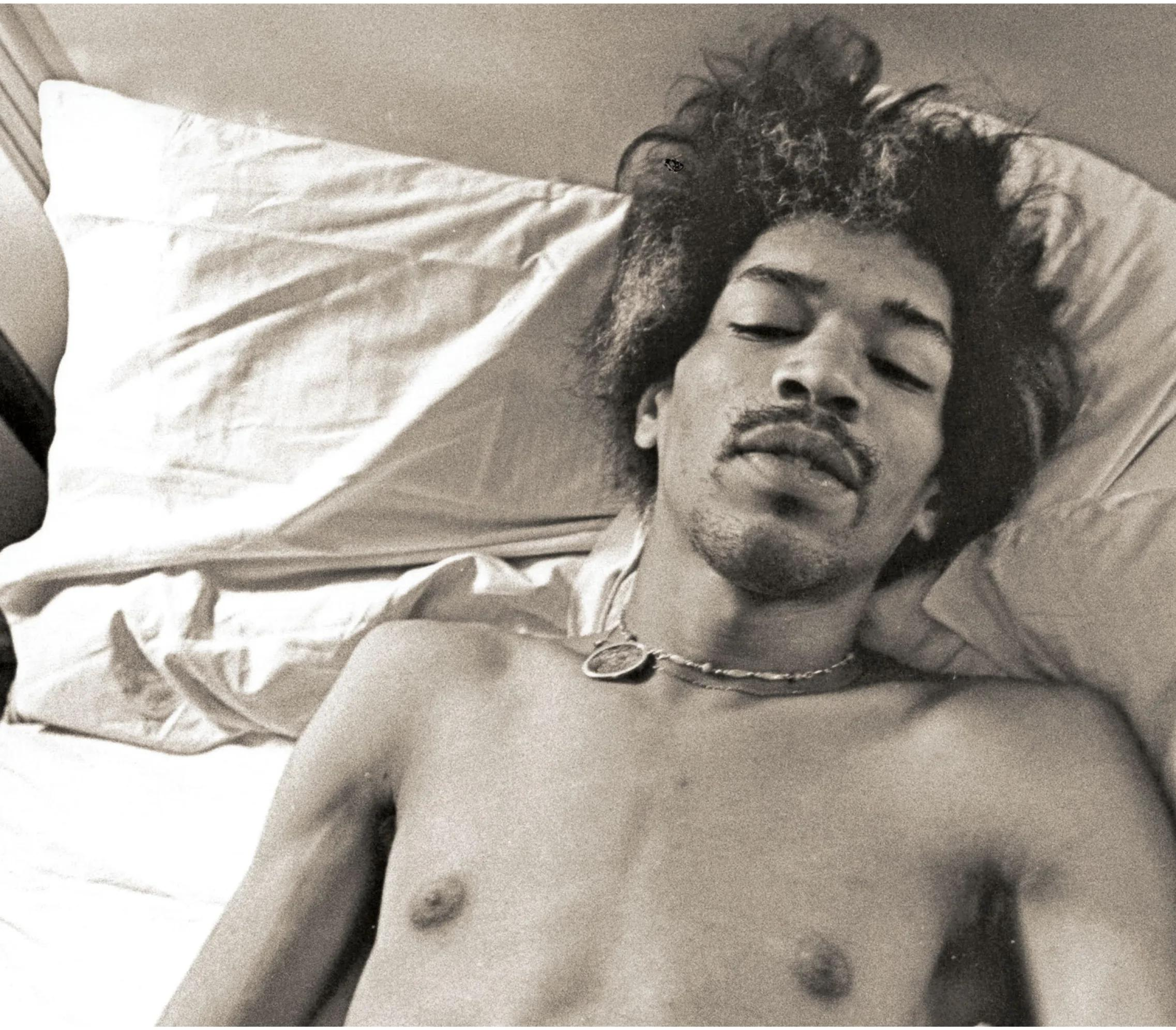


at the Record Plant, it rode on a deceptively slippery rhythm, to the point that Traffic guitarist Dave Mason – playing 12-string acoustic to Hendrix's six – needed several run-throughs. "It always buggers people's minds up," chuckles Kramer. "It's just Jimi's feel. He has a natural feel, because there's an internal metronomic thing in his brain."

The verses offer impeccable hammer-ons and a master's touch, but it's the *Watchtower* solo that endures, spiralling through a freak-out of fiery bends and lightning picking, with a breather for the mellow 'Hawaiian slide' section. Kramer believes the solo was prepped in advance and tracked on a Gibson Flying V, but explains that Hendrix's choice of slide was more on-the-hoof, with the guitarist rifling the studio for knives and beer bottles, before settling on a Zippo lighter: "Well, there were a lot of devices that he used. A Zippo was one… he was known sometimes to use his rings!"

For all its kid-in-a-sweet shop experimentation, *All Along The Watchtower* caused friction, too. As one of six Ladyland tracks on which Hendrix played bass, it was a slap in the face too far for Noel Redding – a guitarist who had swapped to bass to secure his place in the Experience – and fatally soured their relationship. "Jimi's relationship with Noel was great in the beginning," considers Kramer, "but became contentious later on – illustrated by *All Along The Watchtower*, where it was just Jimi and Mitch, with Dave Mason playing the basic [rhythm] track. Jimi overdubbed the bass, which pissed off Noel to no end, and off to the pub he would go. One could say Noel had a bit of a chip on his shoulder, and to some degree I understand it, but at the same time, Jimi was a phenomenal musician and could play bass with the best of them."

Redding had his own version of events: "That's when we were having a few problems within the band already," he noted in a video interview. "I said I didn't like the tune; I prefer Dylan's version! I used to get to the studio at six, and Hendrix wouldn't turn up until three in the morning. We were expected to sit around and wait for him. Which I wasn't prepared to do."

Kramer bats away the suggestion that Hendrix was now drifting fast into junkiedom – "In the studio, if he lit up the

Rainy day, dream away: Jimi takes a break from recording *Electric Ladyland* in New York.

Hendrix with Eddie Kramer (left) at Electric Lady studios in June 1970.

GETTY X2

occasional joint, I don't think anybody cared… I mean, God, this was the 60s after all!" – but concedes his social life was becoming a point of contention. The Record Plant's proximity to the near-mythical Scene Club had initially been a productive factor, with Hendrix jamming with all-comers and luring the best back to the sessions. "The Record Plant was Grand Central," recalls the engineer, "in the sense that it was perfectly placed two blocks from The Scene, and virtually every night, he was there checking out all the musicians who were in town."

Now, the city that never slept began to alienate Hendrix's inner circle, as he returned in the small hours trailed by flunkies, to the disgust of Redding and Chandler. "New York is the capital of hangers-on," the manager noted, "and there'd be 30 people sitting around the studio, and he'd start playing for them, not the recording machine. These hangers-on would laugh at something he did, so he did it again, and again, and again."

"I used to go in the booth," recalled Redding, "and say: 'Excuse me, can I sit down?' And it'd be [aggressive]: 'Hey, man – who are you?'"

As the nights grew longer, the eyebags deeper, the sessions more obsessive and the costs ever more punitive, Chandler was the first to snap, finally pushing back his chair as his one-time protégé laboured over 40-odd takes of *Gypsy Eyes*. "I just said: 'I'm going. I've had enough. When you decide to start listening to me again, I'll be there. Goodbye for now,'" he later recalled.

With Chandler gone, Hendrix had no limiting factor, and duly dived headlong into his vision, with the three-minute pop ejected in favour of sprawling epics such as *1983… (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)*. "When Chas left, we were off to the races on our own," says Kramer. "All of a sudden, it became Jimi and me. It was very much a joint action. He respected what I could do as the engineer, but also my musical knowledge; he would ask about the value of the take, and I'd give whatever suggestions I could. But you'd never tell Jimi what to play. I'd just make sure what he had down on tape was great… and it was always great."

> **"Jimi had a natural feel, an internal metronomic thing in his brain"**
> **Eddie Kramer**

So, it was finished. Released in October 1968, *Electric Ladyland* didn't have an entirely painless birth, with an early acetate misprinting the title as Electric Landlady, and Hendrix appalled by the original sleeve, with its harem of girls paid a fiver to remove their underwear. And yet, glitches aside, *Electric* Ladyland's creative genius was matched by its stone-cold commercial performance, with the album hitting No 6 in the UK despite some British shopkeepers refusing to stock it, and straddling the US chart for two weeks.

Revisit it now, almost half a century later, and *Electric Ladyland* doesn't sound like a swansong, or feel like a full-stop. Quite the opposite: it buzzes with the unmistakable sense that Jimi still had gas in the tank, and the maddening impression that for all the dot-joining posthumous releases that have followed, we'll never truly know what the guitarist had up his sleeve.

Three albums. Four years. But like we say, it's enough. "Does Hendrix's legacy surprise me?" Kramer wonders, then shakes his head. "Not at all. Every successive generation of guitarists who come through the ranks go through a bunch of players and finally end up with Hendrix – and go: 'Oh shit, this is what I have to emulate!' I think if you're a guitar player, whether you love or hate him, you've got to appreciate him for being the greatest rock guitarist of all time."

I CAN SEE FOR MILES

Woodstock was the biggest cultural event of the 1960s. But for an exhausted and emotional Jimi Hendrix, taking the stage at 8.30 in the morning, it marked the beginning of the final chapter of his career…

Words: **David Sinclair**

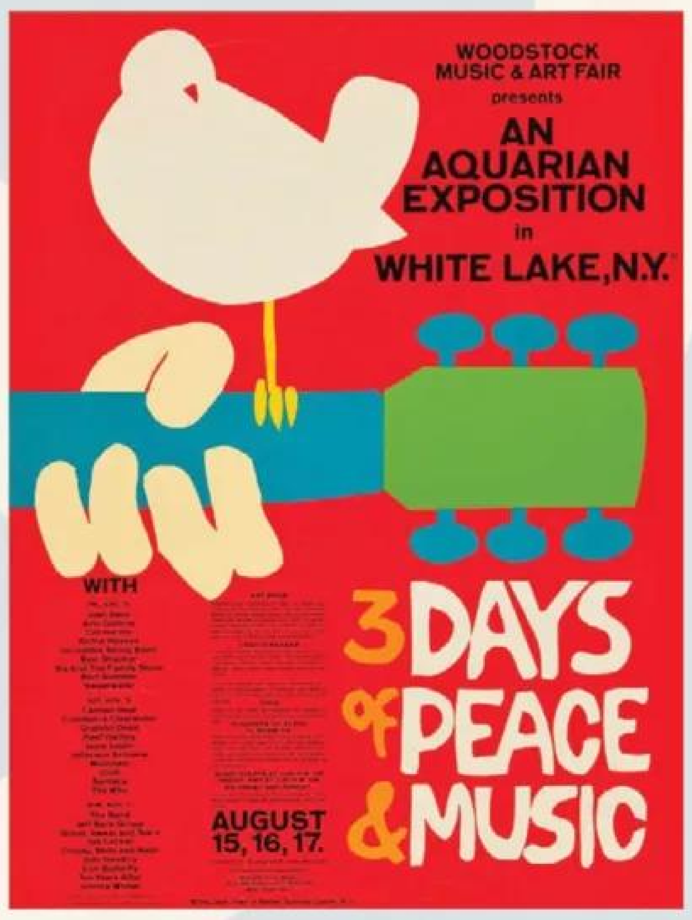
If ever an event has grown in the telling, it was Jimi Hendrix's performance at Woodstock in August 1969. Mismanaged on a cosmic – if not comic – scale, the performance has subsequently morphed into one of the most iconic moments in the history of rock.

Arguably the biggest name and reportedly the highest paid performer on the three-day bill, Hendrix was supposed to bring the festival to a triumphant close at midnight on the final Sunday, August 17. But this was the 1960s, and "technical and weather" delays meant that Hendrix eventually took to the stage at 8.30am the following morning. The massive crowd – estimated at half-a-million at its peak - had dwindled to a mere 40,000, many of whom had only hung around to get a sight of Hendrix, before making a hurried exit as the start of the week beckoned. Thrust on stage in the cold light of day, Hendrix was faced with every performer's worst nightmare – an audience drifting inexorably towards the exits before his eyes. "You can leave if you want to, we're just jamming, that's all," he said disconsolately towards the end of the show, as the band meandered somewhat aimlessly through *Stepping Stone*, an unfamiliar song to audience and musicians alike.

Although introduced by the MC as the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Hendrix was not, in fact, leading the Experience, but road-testing a new group which he had put together only a few weeks before. This was their very first gig. "We decided to change the whole thing around and call it Gypsy, Sun And Rainbows," Hendrix explained, as he took the stage. Alongside drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Billy Cox, the line-up also included guitarist and singer Larry Lee, and percussionists Juma Sultan and Jerry Velez.

The six-piece band had barely rehearsed and Mitchell later remarked that it was the only group he had ever played with that did not get better with practice. "The band was grim," he declared.

"Jimi's intentions were good," Cox added. "But it just didn't work when you had congas and timbales competing with what Mitch was trying to play." The engineers who mixed the live sound, and the camera operators filming the show seemed to agree, and everyone involved evidently came to an unspoken agreement to treat Lee and the two additional percussionists as if they simply weren't there.



The lack of rehearsal, loss of sleep and steady haemorrhaging of the audience throughout the performance was compounded by Hendrix's decision to include in a long setlist a bunch of as-yet-unreleased songs which were either unfamiliar (*Message To Love*, *Hear My Train A Coming*, *Izabella*), unfinished (the rather impressive *Jam Back At The House*), or completely off the radar (*Master Mind* and *Gypsy Woman/Aware Of Love*, two numbers featuring Lee on lead vocals, the success of which may be judged by the fact that neither of them has seen the light of day on any Hendrix album or film footage ever released). Although he had never been inclined to exercise caution in his affairs or his music, Hendrix had truly gone off the deep end on this occasion. What was he thinking?

Spanish Castle Magic incorporated a spirited, percussion-led jam, but the ensuing *Red House* was one of several numbers dogged by tuning issues. This was, of course, long before electronic tuning devices had been invented and Hendrix always gave his strings a fearful bending and hammering. The fact that he was not used to playing with another six-string guitarist was an added complication on this occasion.

Two things changed the course of a gig that was heading for disaster. Firstly, although the audience had largely left, the film crew stayed put, enabling the makers of the subsequent documentary Woodstock, directed by Michael Wadleigh and edited by Martin Scorsese (among others), to include a brilliantly edited segment of Hendrix's performance as the final sequence of the film. And secondly, Hendrix, perhaps sensing something in the zeitgeist in a way that the most gifted artists are somehow able to do, started to play his dramatically retooled version of the US national anthem.

A psychedelic adaptation of *The Star Spangled Banner* had been a feature of his live shows for a while. But the timing and placement of this particular performance gave it a dramatic resonance that lasted long after the final, feedback-drenched notes had echoed round the fields of Bethel in upstate New York. Captured in close-up in the movie, resplendent in a white, beaded jacket and orange headband, Hendrix applied his freakishly long fingers and thumbs to wrench, bend and blast a free-form avalanche of sounds out of his white Stratocaster that conjured images of wonder, terror, anguish and awe. The rest of the band fell silent, apart from Mitchell who added a series of skittish, clattering, madcap, martial drumming sorties to the mayhem.

The familiar sequence of notes - internalised by generations of Americans as a musical representation of their national identity – were stretched and scrunched into all sorts of weird, incongruent shapes, while being all but overwhelmed by an intervening cacophony of wails, shrieks, siren-howls and juddering engine noises. Hammering his elbow against the body

GETTY X2 FLAG: BIG JOHN

Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock: conjuring "bombs, eagles and clouds", according to Carlos Santana.

of the guitar while stretching his hand along the length of the tremolo bar and plunging it in to the guts of the scratchboard with a violent, jolting vibrato, Hendrix wielded an unearthly command of the electronics and physical dynamics of his upside-down instrument, throwing himself theatrically into the performance, while moving purposefully from one foot pedal to another.

Carlos Santana, another of the standout performers at the festival, was one of many who paid tribute to Hendrix's astonishing version. "When I heard Hendrix playing at Woodstock, you hear bombs, you hear a baby being born, an eagle flying, clouds moving, you hear things that people don't normally hear," he said.

Coming at the end of the most significant event ever mounted by the mavens of the 1960s counter-culture, the symbolism of this rendition became magnified into something of immense and lasting importance, with commentators retrospectively ascribing all sorts of meanings to it over the years since Hendrix performed it. America at that time was embroiled in culture wars, race riots and student protests all swirling around the nexus of the Vietnam War. Hendrix's twisted, tortured reinvention of the country's national anthem was taken to be an alternative call to arms, a scathing rebuke and a most eloquent protest at what America had become.

Curiously however, Hendrix – who, as an ex-paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division of the US Military had been a lot closer to the sounds and machinery of warfare than most of his cheerleaders had ever been - was never known to speak of his arrangement of the song in this way. "We're all Americans," he said at a press conference a few weeks later. "It was like 'Go America!' We play it the way the air is in America today. The air is slightly static, see." When asked to explain himself on a US TV show, Hendrix said, "I'm an American so I played it. They made me sing it in school, so it was a flashback. It's not unorthodox. I thought it was beautiful."

The legend of Hendrix's performance that day was further cemented by another instrumental passage, a slow, melancholy blues jam known as *Villanova Junction* with which he counter-intuitively ended his set, and which ended the movie. On stage, Hendrix was calling out the chords and changes to the band, as he felt his way through the sequence. Meanwhile, on screen, the camera roamed across scenes of unimaginable squalor which unfolded as fans cleared up and trudged, some barefoot, through the mud and debris in the immediate aftermath of the festival.

As a soundtrack accompanying these images of dirt and decay, Hendrix's music conjured an unbelievably poignant range of comedown emotions: sadness, serenity, peace, love, elation and desolation. A downbeat ending to an otherwise gung-ho, life-changing event, the *Villanova Junction* sequence in the Woodstock movie stands to this day as a perfect, fin de siecle evocation of the end of the hippie age, conveyed through music and images with a tawdry yet soulful grace.

Hendrix returned for an encore of Hey Joe, after which he left the stage, utterly exhausted. He had not slept for three days and collapsed on the steps coming down from the stage.

Woodstock changed the lives and career trajectories of just about every act that appeared at the festival, and certainly those that were featured in the ensuing film. Released in the US in March 1970, the *Woodstock* movie, became a phenomenon in its own right. Film footage of live music of this kind was not available for public consumption anywhere on the planet at this time, and if you wanted to see anything like it, you had to go to the cinema and see this movie. And people did. In America, on a limited distribution, Woodstock became the fifth-highest grossing movie of 1970.

Hendrix and Woodstock are inextricably linked in the mythology of the 1960s, particularly so in the UK, where the movie did not surface until June 1970. Three months after that, following another uneven performance with Mitchell and Cox at the Isle of Wight Festival, Hendrix died in London, and the end of an era was truly at hand.

Morning glory: was Woodstock the beginning of the end for Hendrix?

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"We play *The Star Spangled Banner* the way the air is in America today. The air is slightly static, see."

Jimi Hendrix

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“He was out of contact with his people. He had alienated them.”

THE LAST POETS’ ALAFIA PUDIM

Harlem Nights

On September 5, 1969, Hendrix returned to New York in an attempt to reconnect with his roots. At least that was the plan.

Words: **Kris Needs**

By 1969 Jimi Hendrix was a stranger in a strange land. His dilemma was that he had shot to fame with the white rock audience, playing with white musicians. At a time when in the US the Black Power movement was demanding action, and soul and jazz were making their presence felt in the mainstream, he felt utterly disconnected from what was going on in the black community, which never heard his records on their radio stations – unless they happened to be in Vietnam.

His first high-profile act of rebellion was to put together the expanded Gypsy Sun And Rainbows band to play Woodstock – an all-black outfit apart from drummer Mitch Mitchell. The band were too loose to undertake a September tour of Southern states, which Hendrix cancelled. He did, however, play a legendary set at a street fair held at 138th Street and Lenox Avenue in his old New York stomping ground of Harlem on September 5, 1969 in aid of the United Block Association, set up by his old friends, twin brothers Arthur and Albert Allen, aka activists the Ghetto Fighters.

The Allen twins persuaded him that a concert in the heart of Harlem would be a good move. The event was announced at a press conference at Frank's Restaurant on 125th Street. "Sometimes when I come up here, people say: 'He plays white rock for white people. What's he doing here?'" Jimi told the *New York Times*. "Well, I want to show them that music is universal, that there is no white rock or black rock."

Hendrix had approached Harlem's famous Apollo Theatre to play there, but backed out when he was told he would have to undertake its standard week-long engagement. Instead he ended up playing on a four-foot-high wooden stage as the climax to a rambunctious block party. The event, hosted by Eddie O'Jay of local black music radio station WWRL, saw Hendrix play on a bill including Maxine Brown, JD Bryant and blues legend Big Maybelle.

Gypsy Sun And Rainbows turned up late so had the tough job of following Maybelle, who had local residents singing out of tenement windows. By the time Hendrix took to the stage after midnight the crowd had dwindled from 5,000 to a few hundred, some throwing eggs and catcalling, others marvelling at Hendrix in front of six seven-foot Marshall stacks. "This music might sound loud and funky, but that's what's in the air right now, isn't it?" he said before he opened with *Fire*. Later he introduced *Voodoo Chile* as "the Harlem national anthem".

"Seeing Jimi in Harlem, it was blazingly apparent that he has a new spirit," wrote Chris Hodenfield in *Circus* magazine at the time. "He has that crazy-ass spirit that he had in Monterey, and his new, no-nonsense band means that we'll hear some more drive and power and RESPECTING good music."

It wasn't to be. Gypsy Sun And Rainbows dissolved the same month after a shambolic downtown club appearance. Hendrix then formed the ill-fated Band Of Gypsys with basisst Billy Cox and drummer Buddy Miles. "He wanted a black band and a black drummer," said Miles. "He wanted to get together with the roots, going back to what he really loved – soul, R&B and blues."

Miles was instrumental in helping Hendrix finally make the direct connection with the black community that he was striving for. Alafia Pudim, of Harlem proto-rappers the Last Poets, was recording in the same studio where Hendrix was working with the Band Of Gypsys. Pudim turned up early, intending to record a street story about a pimp and his doomed hooker they knew. Miles, who was playing on Pudim's session, helped to get Hendrix to play on the track. Jimi responded by uncorking some understated liquid guitar. The resultant 13-minute jam, *Doriella Du Fontaine*, would eventually be released in 1984.

Alafia Pudim believes Hendrix wanted to change. "He was trying," he says. "He was out of contact with his people. He had alienated them – not on purpose, but he got swept along by his popularity with white people. I taught him the Black Power handshake because he didn't know how to do it. All the brothers knew how to do it but Jimi didn't."

It was a fleeting union. By early 1970 Hendrix was back with a reunited Experience, playing to thousands of mostly white rock fans. But the success of bands he inspired, such as Funkadelic, showed that his efforts had not been in vain.

"Jimi Hendrix was the cat that said: 'Not only can you play guitar, I want you to come up front and do the wild thing,'" says ex-Funkadelic bassist Bootsy Collins. "Back in that day, brothers weren't cool with being freaky and being out there like that."

"He saved my show!"

CROONER ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK ON HOW HENDRIX BECAME HIS GUITARIST – FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY.

"A couple of Jimi's musicians used to play with me before they were with him. In the early sixties, when I was becoming established in the United Kingdom, I had Noel Redding and the drummer Eric Dillon [who later joined Redding in Fat Mattress] in my band. Later on, when promoters wanted to introduce a foreign act into the UK they would put them on with an established artist.

In spring 1967, I was part of a package tour with the Walker Brothers and Jimi and The Experience, though Cat Stevens and I were guesting more than being part of the billing.

"I don't know how many concerts we did together on that tour, but it was quite a thrill to be sharing the same stage as Jimi Hendrix. Little did I know that I was walking in the path of genius. It was immediately obvious that he was special, and that tour was when he started smashing his guitars up on stage and burning them, which was revolutionary in those days. I used to watch his show all the time from the wings. I remember seeing him burn his guitar, maybe even on the first night of the tour.

"One night, I can't remember exactly where, my guitarist didn't show up. In fact he didn't even call. But Jimi came over and said: 'Don't worry, man, I'll play for you.' I told him the audience would think it was bizarre if he was on stage with me. He went: 'I'll play behind the curtain.' So he went behind a curtain at the side of the stage and played. It felt as though there were three guitars behind me that night. That's how great he sounded. He was so solid and made everything sound massive. Afterwards I said to the audience: 'I don't think you people realise, but the great Jimi Hendrix has just been playing guitar for me.' He saved my show.

"We hung out together a few times on that tour. He was a very gentle man, a great person to be around. I'd smoke my cigars, we'd chew the fat a little, have a few drinks and relax. I didn't talk about music with him, because we were in different leagues and into different kinds of things. But I do remember him offering me one of his military jackets one night. I just told him: 'It's okay. Thank you so much though.' I was such a fool not to have taken it. I'm sick to this day that I didn't say yes!"

Engelbert Humperdinck (right) with Jimi, Cat Stevens and Walker Brother Gary Leeds.

MAIN SHOT: GETTY; INSET: REX

The Kidnapping Of Jimi Hendrix

Who abducted the world's greatest guitarist on a strange September night in 1969? Was it the Mob? Or his manager? Or was it just a figment of Jimi's drug-addled imagination?

Words: **Johnny Black** Picture: **Reg Innell/Getty**

September 10, 1969 had been a bad night for Jimi Hendrix. And it was about to get considerably worse.

Earlier that evening, the guitarist had stormed off the tiny stage of New York's Mafia-controlled Salvation Club, spitting out a venomous "This is bullshit!" as he went. The gig had been beset by sound problems, the venue was not suited to amped-up rock, and patrons were seen to be walking out while his new band, Gypsy Sun And Rainbows, delivered a decidedly underwhelming set.

Hendrix had left the Salvation in the company of the club's owner, Bobby Woods, who also happened to be his coke dealer (and who would be found dead with five bullets in his head a few months later). The pair had whiled away the dregs of the evening together, but now Hendrix was walking alone on a dark city street, wrapped in his own thoughts – until the violent squealing of brakes snapped him out of his reverie.

"Before I realised what had happened," he later told his friend, band leader Curtis Knight, "I found myself forcibly abducted by four men. I was blindfolded and gagged and shoved in the back of a car."

His head swam as he lay there with the unknown assailant's knee pressed into his back, as the car accelerated through the night towards an unknown destination. For the next few days, none of Hendrix's friends knew his whereabouts; some of them weren't even aware that he had disappeared. But one fact is certain: on that dark evening in New York, the chaotic life of the world's most famous guitarist took its weirdest turn yet.

If it sounds more like a scene from *The Sopranos* than a typical night on the town for a rock god, that's because, as the 60s hurtled to a close, Jimi Hendrix found himself in increasingly unsavoury company. Thanks to the connections of his inner circle, he often mixed with hoodlums for whom violence was a way of life – and who saw Hendrix as a potential cash cow. In the words of his fashion designer girlfriend Colette Mimram, Hendrix was: "surrounded by vultures".

"At that time in the New York scene, the Mafia controlled a lot of things," says Jerry Velez, a respected percussionist who played with Hendrix in Gypsy Sun And Rainbows and had been on stage at the Salvation on the night of the kidnapping. "We all knew the Mafia guys."

Velez's fellow percussionist Juma Sultan, also a member of Rainbows, was similarly familiar with the gangster milieu of New York's seedy urban underbelly. "I was a former Black Panther," says Sultan, who has since become a Christian minister affiliated with the In His Name Ministries. "I smuggled drugs from Colombia, I spent six months in prison in Pakistan. Occasionally I carried my own pistol."

Neither Velez nor Sultan were the "vultures" that Colette Mimram refers to. But one person who could easily have fallen into that category was Hendrix's unscrupulous, Machiavellian manager, Mike Jeffery.Jeffery was a pivotal

"BEFORE I REALISED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, I WAS BLINDFOLDED AND SHOVED IN THE BACK OF A CAR." JIMI HENDRIX

Hendrix: was his kidnapping a stunt by manager Mike Jeffery?

in Hendrix's life. Nearly 10 years older than the guitarist, he didn't look like a heavyweight rock'n'roll manager. "He was always smartly dressed – but not Savile Row smart," says Tony Bramwell, a Beatles aide who frequently met Jeffery in the course of his work. "More like a bookmaker. Dodgy, double-breasted cavalry twill overcoats with lapels and epaulettes, and suits that were always a bit too shiny or too dull. His hair was so bluey-black you felt he might have dyed it."

Jeffery's past is shrouded in mystery, though it has been suggested that before entering the music business in the early 60s as a club owner and manager of Newcastle band the Animals he was an MI5 agent. According to Hendrix biographers Harry Shapiro and Ceasar Glebbeek in their book *Jimi Hendrix, Electric Gypsy*, Jeffery often boasted of "undercover work against the Russians, of murder, mayhem and torture in foreign cities".

He certainly had the look of a slightly down-at-heel secret agent. "Slightly sinister, with tinted glasses, a bit of *Smiley's People* about him," says Keith Altham, one of the most important publicists of the era and a friend of Jeffery's co-manager of Jimi, ex-Animals bassist Chas Chandler. "You felt he wanted people to be frightened of him. Nothing was ever stated, everything was implied. He certainly didn't understand music. He was purely a businessman."

Jimi's first manager, Chas Chandler.

Jeffery initially co-managed Hendrix with Chandler. They made a good team, with Chandler's solid, Northern common sense balancing Jeffery's behind-the-scenes ruthlessness. "Jeffery was very low-profile when Jimi took off in 1967," says Tony Bramwell. "We always dealt with Chas." "Jeffery didn't take any interest in Jimi until the money started coming in," confirms Keith Altham.

After Chandler quit as Hendrix's co-manager in 1968, Jeffery took sole control of the guitarist's career. By the time Hendrix was kidnapped, Jeffery's primary objective was to reunite him with his world-beating band the Experience, who had split a few months earlier. That meant separating Jimi from his new compatriots in Gypsy Sun And Rainbows. Inevitably for Sultan and Velez, the manager was the enemy.

"It was a guarded, angry, suppressing kind of environment," says Velez now. "When he came in the room the temperature dropped by about 10 degrees; the wind would come and we'd shiver, hair standing on end."

It didn't take Hendrix long to realise how vital Chandler had been to the management team. Now, Jimi began to actively explore possible avenues of escape from Jeffery's clutches.

"Jimi felt he had been ripped off by Michael," reveals Colette Mimram. "I had dinner one night with Jimi and a very powerful lawyer in New York, and he wanted to get out of that contract. But then where was he gonna go? Everybody wanted a piece of him."

In the late spring of 1969, Jeffery employed an associate named Jerry Morrison – rumoured to once have been the PR man for Haitian dictator Papa Doc Duvalier – to find somewhere outside New York City where Hendrix could rehearse. Sultan recalls visiting around four properties with Morrison, including one owned by Johnny Winter, before settling on the Shokan House. Located in the quiet hamlet of Boiceville, this large piece of property was dubbed the Shokan House after the larger community of Shokan, a few miles away.

"The main building was a stone manor house with about four bedrooms, and another house behind it, like a farmhouse," Sultan recalls. "You had horses, cows, things of that nature. It also had a small, low cabin, a gate house, by the creek just outside the gate, where I settled in."

The location was convenient for many reasons. Being remote, it was a safe retreat for rehearsals and whatever other pursuits Hendrix wished to pursue. It was also just nine miles from Woodstock, the upstate New York town that had become a popular haunt for musicians after Bob Dylan moved there in the mid-60s. Velez's sister, Martha, lived in Woodstock with her boyfriend Keith Johnson, trumpeter with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. Tellingly, Jeffery also owned a house there.

Claire Moriece was a student fresh out of university. In May 1969 she was hired by Jeffery to cook for one of his acts who would be staying at the Shokan House. "I was not told who I would be working for, and was literally driven to the house blindfolded from Route 28."

Moriece remembers the Shokan House as a hive of activity ranging from rehearsals to drugs and seductions. Jimi – with whom she took mescaline – and the band were the most constant occupants, but there was a constantly shifting blur of visitors.

"The British roadies were there for a bit. They wanted tomatoes fried in bacon fat!" she says. "Gerry Velez had a posse that came up from the city once. There was also an underage girl from Texas Jimi may have picked up hitch-hiking. Someone once showed up in the night on foot saying they'd brought Jimi some magic beads. I drove her in my car to the nearest place she could get a bus, but she started a fire in my car."

And that's where events – or at people's recollections of them – diverge.

Jim Marron was a former nightclub manager who Hendrix had employed in 1968 to oversee the conversion of former West Village nightspot the Generation Club into Electric Lady Studio. During August 1969, while based in Jimi's manager's office on E 37th Street, Marron found himself being kept abreast, moment by moment, of the strange events that Mike Jeffery said were shattering the rural idyll of the Shokan House.

"Jeffery was telling me that a team of mobsters had gone up to Shokan," Marron recalls today. "They walked in with their guns out, and said to Jimi: 'You're under house arrest. You're ours.' They let him continue partying but he couldn't leave the premises."

Tense phone calls were made to and from the house to establish exactly what was going on. According to Marron, after some time the gang were discovered to be low-ranking Mafia soldiers trying to wrest Jimi's management contract away from Jeffery.

Jeffery, well-connected with the underworld, placed a call to a Long Island concert promoter. "Mike was owed a favour by this guy, who said: 'Okay, I'll take care of it,'" explains Marron. "So this promoter sent another car with four or five armed guys up to Shokan. They walk in and say, look, you guys are outta here because so-and-so has sent us. Their boss was above the guy the kidnappers worked for, so they moved out."

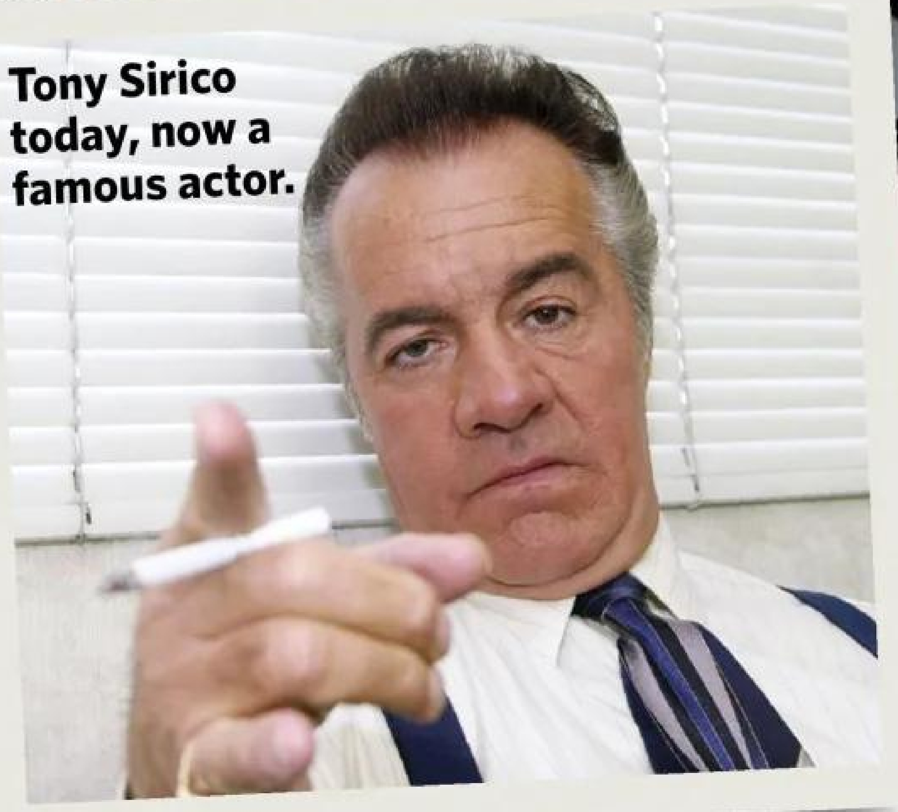
"JEFFERY DIDN'T TAKE ANY INTEREST IN JIMI UNTIL THE MONEY STARTED COMING IN." KEITH ALTHAM

Marron's version of events are at odds with that of Sultan, who was actually there at house. According to the percussionist, it was Jeffery and two heavies who arrived at the house in a chauffeur-driven limousine.

LEFT: GETTY RIGHT: PHOTOSHOT

Hendrix tearing it up with Gypsy Sun And Rainbows

GETTY X3



Tony Sirico today, now a famous actor.

"They were talking about Jimi doing an appearance at the Salvation, which Jimi didn't want to do because he was trying to get his new music together with us," says Sultan. "We were all downstairs when Jeffery arrived at Shokan House, but they decided to take Jimi upstairs to talk."

As Jeffery and Hendrix talked out of earshot, the manager's chauffeur hung a target on a tree outside the house, took out his .38 and started firing into it – an act that Sultan feels must have been pretty intimidating for the guitarist. "Then he [Hendrix] came down and said: 'I guess we're gonna do this.'"

Before they left the house, says the percussionist, Jeffery's goons tried to make him sign a contract with a company called Piranha Productions. "The idea of that contract was to break up Gypsy Sun And Rainbows," Sultan says now. "It was a production deal in which it was made explicit that, if I accepted it, I could not play with Jimi. I never signed that."

The second version of events revolves around the Salvation Club itself. The venue had opened in 1967 at 1 Sheridan Square in Manhattan's West Village. Its listing in *New York* magazine read: "Weird, eerie, atmospheric and misty." Colette Mimram remembers it as "a very nice discotheque", before quickly adding: "That's where the shady characters were."

By the middle of 1969, like almost every other New York club the Salvation management was quickly infiltrated by gangsters, including Bobby Woods and Genaro Sirico. One of Salvation's founders, Bradley Pierce, describes Woods as "a guy who had made a lotta money in the wholesale car business. I got to know him because he came to the club as a customer." When Pierce's first partner in the club, the photographer and filmmaker Jerry Schatzberg, left to focus on his career, Pierce invited Woods to replace him. Within weeks he realised that Woods was likely to attract unwelcome attention from Mafia-connected individuals who visited the club purely on a social basis. "He had a heavy coke habit and he kept a gun over our office door. You can't be a tough guy with the Mafia. So I bowed out in the spring of 1969."

In February 1970, Bobby Woods was found dead, the victim of a gangland hit. He had been shot in the head five times. Before his death he had boasted that he was safe from the mob because he had documented everything and, as an insurance policy, if anything happened to him his diaries would be released to the press. (They were released after his death, and promptly sank with barely a ripple).

Genaro Sirico – aka Tony Sirico – was known to many people in Hendrix's social circle. One, who prefers to remain unidentified, recalls how Steve Paul, owner of the Scene club, "very seldom went into his own club for fear of the Tony Siricos and the Mob guys. He did everything by telephone." Sirico was convicted of felony weapons possession, after threatening another nightclub owner, John Addison, in 1971 and sentenced to four years in prison. In court, prosecutor Gerard Hinckley revealed that Sirico had told Addison that the last person "who refused to give Junior Sirico the respect he deserves… was Bobby Woods and, he said, 'You saw what happened to him'". Sirico was questioned about the murder of Woods, but he was neither accused nor charged with the crime. It remains unsolved to this day.

Bradley Pierce insists, however, that neither Woods nor Sirico were ever fully-fledged Mafioso, merely wannabes who hung around with mobsters. Pierce also recalls how Sirico did him a favour by removing his liquor licence from the entrance to the Salvation.

"See, anything bad that happened while Bobby was running the club would have gone on my liquor licence record. So Tony brought it to me and I turned it over to the authorities."

These days, Pierce is better known to his flock in a Connecticut house of worship as Father Brad, while Tony Sirico went on to carve out a career as an actor. He is best known for his portrayal of Paulie 'Walnuts' Gualtieri in mobster drama *The Sopranos*.

Sirico wasn't in the club on the night of September 10, 1969, although his associate Bobby Woods was. It was after the gig on that night that Jimi Hendrix was, in his own words, bundled into the back of a car and driven to a house in Brooklyn, where he was held for between one and two days. The only people who truly know what happened next were the

"A TEAM OF MOBSTERS HAD GONE UP TO SHOKAN. THEY WALKED IN WITH THEIR GUNS OUT." JIM MARRON

Stone free: Hendrix and friends post-'kidnapping'.

> **"CHAS CHANDLER AND NOEL REDDING THOUGHT THAT MIKE JEFFERY HAD SET THE WHOLE THING UP."** KEITH ALTHAM

kidnappers and Hendrix himself, but the guitarist's associates have wildly different takes on what happened.

Bob Levine, who worked as Jeffery's business manager, points the finger of blame at the Mafia. Recalling the kidnapping in John McDermott and Eddie Kramer's 1992 book *Hendrix: Setting The Record Straight*, Levine tied Hendrix's disappearance into Bobby Woods's death. "The next night [after the gig] Woods was found murdered, gangland-style," he said. "The 'boys' knew Hendrix had spent the night with Woods and wanted to know what he had heard from him." This, reckoned Levine, was why the 'boys' kidnapped Hendrix after the Salvation gig.

The major flaw in Levine's version of events is that Woods was shot and killed almost five months later, rather than the night after the show. Levine declined the opportunity to be interviewed for this piece. "He's not disposed to doing this," his publicist told us.

What various associates do appear to agree on is that Mike Jeffery sprang into action. According to Levine, the kidnappers had "sent word down that he was being treated comfortably and released in a couple of days". On finding out the address, the manager sent some of his own heavies to rescue his charge.

"They [the kidnappers] took him and held him somewhere for about a day," says Sultan, who played with Hendrix at the disastrous Salvation show and who says the guitarist told him what happened when he returned to the Shokan House after his disappearance. "They blindfolded him, threatened him, and then 24 hours later Mike Jeffery and his crew came in like gangbusters and rescued him. Jimi was laughing about it. He saw it all as a set-up organised by Jeffery."

There have been suggestions that Jeffery staged the kidnap himself as a publicity stunt. "No," says Keith Altham, widely acknowledge as one of the best PR men of the era. "That's not how you do a publicity stunt. The first thing you do is tell the papers. And they never did that."

Other people close to Hendrix suggest that the kidnapping may never have happened. As Jimi's clothes designer, Colette Mimram saw the guitarist most days during this period, although she was in Morocco when the incident was said to have occurred.

"Kidnapped?" she says. "No, it's too weird. I don't believe that. Maybe he went out of town and disappeared for two or three days with a woman, and then said that he was kidnapped."

There's also a possibility that Hendrix's ever-increasing drug intake may have caused him to imagine the whole episode. "You have to remember that Jimi lived in a dream," explains Altham. "If Mike Jeffery locked him in a room to make sure he was around when a show started, Jimi might well have thought he'd been kidnapped."

"Jimi told me he was kidnapped," remembers Claire Moriece, "but I remember thinking that he was telling me about a dream. I asked him about it and he said: 'No it really happened.'"

The alleged kidnapping was never reported to the NYPD, so there was no official investigation or contemporary record. The mystery is complicated by the fact that many of the people involved are dead.

Bobby Woods died early the following year, shot by an unknown assailant. Hendrix's band leader friend Curtis Knight, to whom the guitarist admitted being kidnapped, died in 1999, a;though not before writing a tell-all book, *Jimi: An Intimate Biography Of Jimi Hendrix*, which speculated on Jimi's death. Jimi's former co-manager Chas Chandler died of a heart condition in 1996. Hendrix himself died of an apparent overdose of sleeping pills in London in September 1970.

And Hendrix's final manager, Mike Jeffery? The shadowy, ruthless figure behind Hendrix's career was killed in a mid-air collision over Nantes, in France in 1973.

Which leaves a handful of very different theories as to what happened that night after the Salvation gig and who was behind it. That it was a publicity stunt is highly unlikely. That Hendrix skipped town himself to get away from the pressures of New York has only slim support. That it was a Mafia manoeuvre to extract information about Bobby Woods is full of holes and inconsistencies.

Which leaves the fake kidnap, staged by the devious Mike Jeffery, as the most likely candidate. It is supported by Hendrix's reported statements to Juma Sultan, Curtis Knight and more.

Keith Altham, arguably the best-connected publicist of the period, offers what may be the clincher. "I only got it second-hand," he says, "but from very good sources – Chas Chandler and Noel Redding. Their take was that Mike Jeffery set the whole thing up – maybe a kind of wake-up call, or a warning, or to convince Jimi that he needed Mike as a manager. They had no doubts that it happened. It's certainly the kind of thing Mike was perfectly capable of, it perfectly fits his way of working."

Just one year later, Jimi Hendrix was dead following circumstances that have never been adequately explained. But that's another story. Or is it? .

GYPSY SOUL

In January 1970, Jimi Hendrix pulled the plug on stardom to chase a funkier, freer direction with his **Band Of Gypsys**. In the trio's brief existence, they helped redefine the nature of the rock gig.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

GETTY

In his last ever interview, in September 1970, Jimi Hendrix said: "I have this little saying: 'When things get too heavy, just call me helium – the lightest known gas to man.'"

Eight months earlier, in that spirit, Jimi had begun the decade with four New Year performances at New York's Fillmore East with his newly formed trio Band Of Gypsys, the 'helium' vehicle which he assumed carried him away from what he called the "ego-tripping" dead end he'd reached with the Experience, and into uncharted territory.

In a true 'Scuse me while I kiss the sky' moment, everything about Hendrix seemed up in the air. His former bandmates, drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding, two white English guys, were replaced by black Americans Buddy Miles and Billy Cox. Out went the three-minute hits, in came hard funk jams that expanded to eight minutes or more. The set-list ignored proven favourites in favour of unheard songs such as *Machine Gun* and *Who Knows*, at least half of them still unfinished and untitled. And Hendrix himself, dressed down in a blue silk shirt and bell-bottomed jeans, cut a surprisingly understated figure on stage, eyes closed, digging deep for fiery licks. His Stratocaster remained cradled against his hip, never once flying behind his head or through his legs.

"I don't want to be a rock'n'roll star... I consider myself first and foremost a musician."

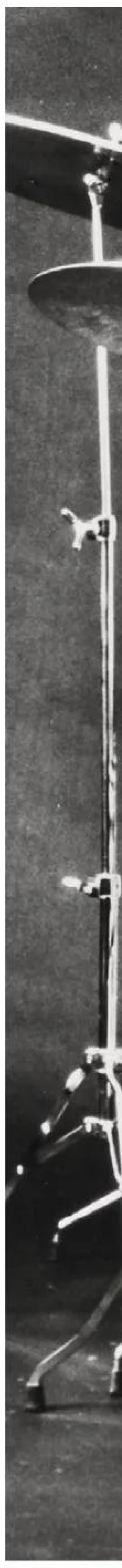
Jimi Hendrix in 1969

"I don't want to be a clown any more," Jimi famously told *Rolling Stone* in late '69. "I don't want to be a rock'n'roll star." A month later, he said: "I consider myself first and foremost a musician. My initial success was a step in the right direction, but it was only a step. A couple of years ago, all I wanted was to be heard; 'Let me in' was the thing. Now I'm trying to figure out the wisest way to be heard."

Engineer Eddie Kramer, who mixed the 1970 album *Band Of Gypsys*, said: "When Jimi did concerts he was in the embarrassing position of: 'I don't really want to get down on my knees and spray lighter fluid on my guitar and put the guitar behind my back and play with my teeth, and

Jimi Hendrix: opening up new horizons in 1970.

GEORGE RODRIGUEZ/CACHE AGENCY-DALLE/ICONICPIX



put on a big show.' He obviously was brilliant at doing that, but now he just wanted to stand up and play music."

And music in the cosmic sense. Beyond personal reinvention, Jimi was now out to reshape the very nature of the rock concert. He hit the stage without a set-list, spontaneously calling tunes to Miles and Cox, often making time and tempo changes on the fly, conducting them with a head nod or raising of his guitar neck. It was more like a jazz gig at the Blue Note than a big rock show at the Fillmore. By modern standards, this kind of radical deconstruction would be career suicide. Today, stakes are too high, attention spans too short and concert tickets too expensive for an artist three albums into their career to suddenly walk such a public tight rope. But for Hendrix it was the direction his artistic compass insisted he go.

Jimi's liberation began on a mutinous note months earlier, with the Jimi Hendrix Experience's now infamous appearance on Lulu's TV live variety show on January 4. Halfway through *Hey Joe*, they stopped, and he said: "We'd like to stop playing this rubbish and dedicate a song to the Cream (who had just announced that they had split),' and they tore abruptly into *Sunshine Of Your Love*. As Lulu and her producers panicked, Jimi said with a laugh: "We're getting put off the air."

That set the tone for a tumultuous 1969, marked by a drug bust and trial that saw Jimi narrowly escape a 20-year prison sentence; a disaster-laden struggle to build his own studio, Electric Lady; the suspicion that his manager Mike Jeffrey was embezzling money; and the unravelling of the Experience. The trio, assembled by former manager Chas Chandler, was never one built on bonhomie, and bassist Redding had formed his own competing group, Fat Mattress. Chandler observed that they'd devolved into "three guys soloing at the same time, their former unity gone".

On his way toward Band Of Gypsys, Jimi briefly tried a bigger group, the Gypsy Suns & Rainbows ensemble that backed him at Woodstock that August. And all of this personal struggle unfolded against an equally turbulent backdrop of civil rights and the Vietnam War. It was also surely why Jimi looked back for something familiar before moving forward, tapping his old army buddy Billy Cox to join him on bass. The two met in 1960 in the 101st Airborne, in Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, when Cox heard a guitarist who sounded "like John Lee Hooker meets Beethoven". They played together in a band called The Kasuals in the R&B clubs of Nashville.

"There was a tight integration between Billy and Jimi," Eddie Kramer said. "Jimi would show Billy a riff, and he would rehearse it until the bass and guitar melded into one instrument."

To complete the trio, Hendrix chose drummer Buddy Miles. They'd met on the chitlin circuit years before, when Miles was playing with Wilson Pickett and Jimi was with the Isley Brothers.

The three rehearsed and experimented in New York studios from October until December 1969. Jimi told the guys he wanted them to be the earth and water to his air and sky.

"They loved to jam," Kramer said. "In the studio, that's all they did, just play for hours and hours, experimenting. And running up huge bills. It would be unthinkable today."

"They loved to jam. In the studio they'd just play for hours and hours, experimenting."

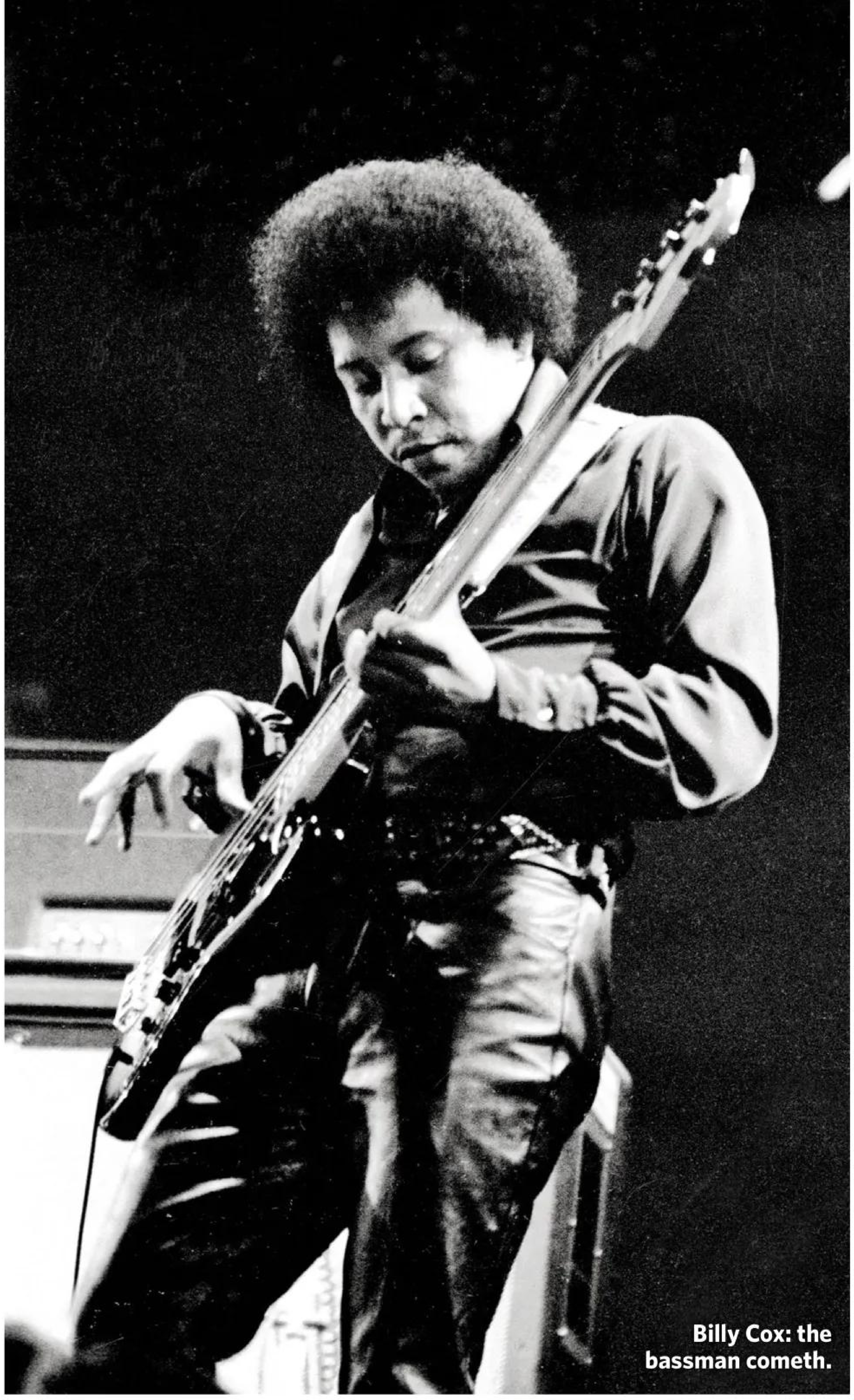
Engineer Eddie Kramer on Band Of Gypsys

This sense of exploration was inspired by Jimi's two biggest heroes: Bob Dylan and jazz great Miles Davis.

Dylan was a master skin shedder, changing directions and leaving new genres like folk rock in his wake. He was also a Greenwich Village neighbour of Jimi's, and one day the star-struck Jimi bumped into him on 8th Street. "Bob, I'm a singer, you know, uh, called Jimi Hendrix…" he stammered. Dylan said: "I don't know if anyone has done my songs better," then hurried off. Jimi felt like he'd been blessed by the Dalai Lama.

Jimi met Miles Davis at a hair salon. Davis liked Jimi's 'blowout' Afro and wanted the same. The two musicians occasionally double-dated with their girlfriends. There was mutual admiration, but the older Davis was more of a father figure to Jimi, recommending records and dispensing

Buddy Miles: the heartbeat of Band Of Gypsys.



Billy Cox: the bassman cometh.

philosophical advice. What fascinated Jimi was the way Davis approached his sessions and live gigs. From Davis's groundbreaking album *Kind Of Blue* onward, he adopted the approach of providing his musicians with bare-bones sketches of tunes, then let them evolve organically with each player's personality on display. The live *Band Of Gypsys* would be released the same week as Davis's electric fusion album *Bitches Brew*.

An intriguing aside: in October 1969, Jimi and Miles sent a telegram to Paul McCartney, inviting him to New York to play bass for a collaborative album session. Macca was on holiday and missed the invitation. The session never happened, leaving us with one of rock's most tantalising 'what if's.

The Band of Gypsys' Fillmore shows supplied material for *Band Of Gypsys*. The album was part of a court agreement to fulfil the final obligation in a contract Hendrix signed, foolishly, in 1965. Over the four sets they played, all completely different, the trio displayed a kind of funk telepathy, jamming without much visual interaction, locking into that elusive groove that musicians forever chase – a loose tightness. If there was one hitch, it was Buddy's tendency to overdo the James Brown-style vocalising. At times, Jimi looked visibly perturbed by his showboating. At the heart of each set was *Machine Gun*, which Jimi had introduced six months earlier. Dedicated to soldiers *'in Chicago and Milwaukee and New York… and Vietnam,'* it remains, as promoter Bill Graham called it, "the most brilliant, emotional display of virtuoso electric guitar playing ever".

This promising start aside, Jimi's new direction was actively discouraged by manager Mike Jeffrey, who loathed Buddy Miles, and was angling to get the Experience back together. It was also complicated by Jimi's drug use and his coterie of enablers. On January 28 the Band of Gypsys played their final gig, at the Winter Festival For Peace at Madison Square Garden. Jimi was foggy and obviously drugged as opener *Who Knows* collapsed in a mess. Mid-solo on the next song, his guitar howling with feedback, Jimi stopped, and said: "That's what happens when Earth fucks with space." Buddy and Billy asked for the audience's patience while they "try to get things together". But by then Jimi was off stage and doubled over with stomach cramps. Buddy accused Jeffrey of slipping Hendrix tabs of acid to sabotage the group. Jeffrey fired him, saying: "Your trip is over."

> **"I want a big band, full of competent musicians I can conduct and write for."**
>
> **Hendrix in September 1970**

The *Band Of Gypsys* album was released on March 25, 1970 to good reviews and sales. But Jimi said: "If it had been up to me I would never have put it out. From a musician's point of view, it was not a good recording. Not enough preparation went into it and it came out a bit grizzly."

Late last year, a 50th-anniversary box set, *Songs For Groovy Children*, was released, which included the complete Fillmore performances.

Buddy Miles, who did jail time in the 80s for theft, continued to gig, and found commercial success as the voice behind the California Raisins. He died in 2008 of heart failure. Billy Cox, now 80, lives in Nashville and still tours with the Experience Hendrix Tribute, and will be promoting the anniversary of *Band Of Gypsys* in 2020.

Jimi's story, of course, ended tragically. It's worth restating that he was 27, if only to put him in perspective with similar musical innovators. When jazz great Louis Armstrong was 28, his Hot Five recordings redefined the nature of pop singing. When Miles Davis was 30, he changed jazz with his album *The Birth Of The Cool*. Jimi was on the brink of new horizons, and Band Of Gypsys was, as he might have said, "a first step" at not only reshaping his direction but that of rock performances. The spontaneous improvised spirit was definitely picked up in the 70s by the Allman Brothers Band, Led Zeppelin and the Grateful Dead, among others.

A comment Jimi made in September 1970 makes his absence in that evolution more bittersweet: "Thinking that this era of music, sparked off by The Beatles, has come to an end, something new has got to come. And I will be there. I want a big band, full of competent musicians I can conduct and write for. And with the music we will paint pictures of earth and space, so that the listener can be taken somewhere."

GETTY x2

"A Phantasmic Autobiography About A Super-Stud Who Becomes Famous..."

Do the vaults hold more Hendrix *Gold*?

GETTY

A set of unreleased acid-fried songs about a mythical superhero could have been Jimi's last album. This is the mysterious story behind *Black Gold* – the great lost Hendrix LP. Words: **Kris Needs**

Jimi Hendrix's posthumous discography is built on unfinished tracks and studio out-takes. Since his death in September 1970 there has been a stream of releases – some official, others less so. But there's one set of songs that remains unreleased: *Black Gold*, an unfinished, autobiographical suite that may have provided the foundation for his fifth studio album.

Following the release of *Electric Ladyland* in 1968, Hendrix was besieged by personal and business problems. Despite this – or maybe because of it – he continued to write and record, keeping the tapes rolling as he hammered and honed tracks through different incarnations of songs at various studios, with a view to knuckling down and starting work on his next album as soon as he finished touring.

But the tracks that made up *Black Gold* were different. Recorded on his Martin acoustic guitar in Hendrix's New York apartment and in hotel rooms between mid-1969 and spring of 1970, it was a suite of songs mapped into a bigger, over-arching concept – a fantasy biography in which Hendrix imagined himself as a range of characters such as Black Gold, Astro Man and Captain Midnite. On the one hand, it seemed like Hendrix was tapping into the vogue for concept albums, as pioneered by The Who. On the other, it suggested he was dealing with the escalating pressures that surrounded him by taking refuge in the cartoons he'd loved as a kid.

"Here was this cat came around called Black Gold," he said rather vaguely in one interview. "And there was this other cat came around called Captain Coconut. Other people came around. I was all these people… That's my life until something else comes about." In another, he talked about writing "pieces… movements, but like I was writing music cartoons".

> **"One night we sat down and did the entire thing on a cassette set-up – it was magnificent!"**
> **Alan Douglas**

The songs that made up *Black Gold* were a mix of early acoustic sketches of various tracks, some of which would be released in different forms while Hendrix was alive (*Stepping Stone*, *Machine Gun*, both from the *Band Of Gypsys* live album), others which would end up on posthumous releases (*Drifting*, *Suddenly November Morning* and *Trash Man*).

But it's the ones that have never officially seen the light of day that are of most interest. These include *Captain Midnight 1201*, *God Bless The Day* and the jazzy, flamenco-inspired *The Jungle Is Waiting* (with Hendrix providing appropriate sound effects). More than one title referred to the Black Gold character, namely *Here Comes Black Gold* and *Black Gold* itself. Elsewhere, *Little Red Room* was rumoured to refer a girl named Tami, whose mother, Diane Carpenter, claimed was Jimi's daughter from a 1966 relationship, while *Send My Love To Joan Of Arc* would become *Send My Love To Kathy* (after girlfriend Kathy Etchingham), before changing again to *Send My Love To Linda* (apparently for phonetic reasons).

With its Mighty Mouse-inspired *'Here I am to save the day'* intro, the two-part *Astro Man* was the track most obviously inspired by Hendrix's fascination with superheroes – not least its comical second part, about a girl flipping out on acid and falling out of a window, only to be rescued by the eponymous hero (Hendrix would work up a version of the first part of the song with the Band Of Gypsys.)

Hendrix never got the chance to finish *Black Gold*. In the immediate years after his death, the songs attained the status of myth, before their existence was confirmed by Hendrix archivist Alan Douglas.

"Jimi did a suite… called *Black Gold*, kind of a phantasmic autobiography about a super stud that goes out on the road, becomes famous and goes up in the sky," Douglas said in 1975. "One night we sat down and did the entire thing on a cassette set-up – it was magnificent! We were going to do an album from it, and a movie and so on."

Douglas rarely mentioned the record again, except to suggest that the tapes had been stolen from Hendrix's apartment by two disgruntled employees of the guitarist's final manager, Mike Jeffery.

In a surreal twist, in 1992 Hendrix collector Tony Brown traced the *Black Gold* tape to Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell. Hendrix had presented it to Mitchell for safe keeping, along with several other cassettes. Mitchell had sat on the tape for all that time.

Mitchell died in 2008 without making *Black Gold* public. He was said to have sold the tape to the Experience Hendrix Project, who in 2010 said they would release the album "this decade". As of now, it remains in the vaults, leaving the world wondering just what *Black Gold* could have been.

Hendrix's Last Stand

Forget Woodstock or the Isle of Wight – Jimi's late-career triumph was at Atlanta, ten weeks before he died.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

In many ways it's quintessentially American. We're into the early hours of the Fourth of July, 1970, and Jimi Hendrix is marking the occasion by striking the opening chords of the national anthem. His distinctive take on *The Star-Spangled Banner* is unfurled before half a million people in Atlanta, Georgia, while fireworks pop and flash overhead.

He's nearing the end of his show, having played to the biggest American audience of his life. Appropriately too, it's been one of his greatest ever performances. He has a terrific new band, a new studio and a bushel of scintillating new songs to boot. The future, from this vantage point, looks to be there for the taking.

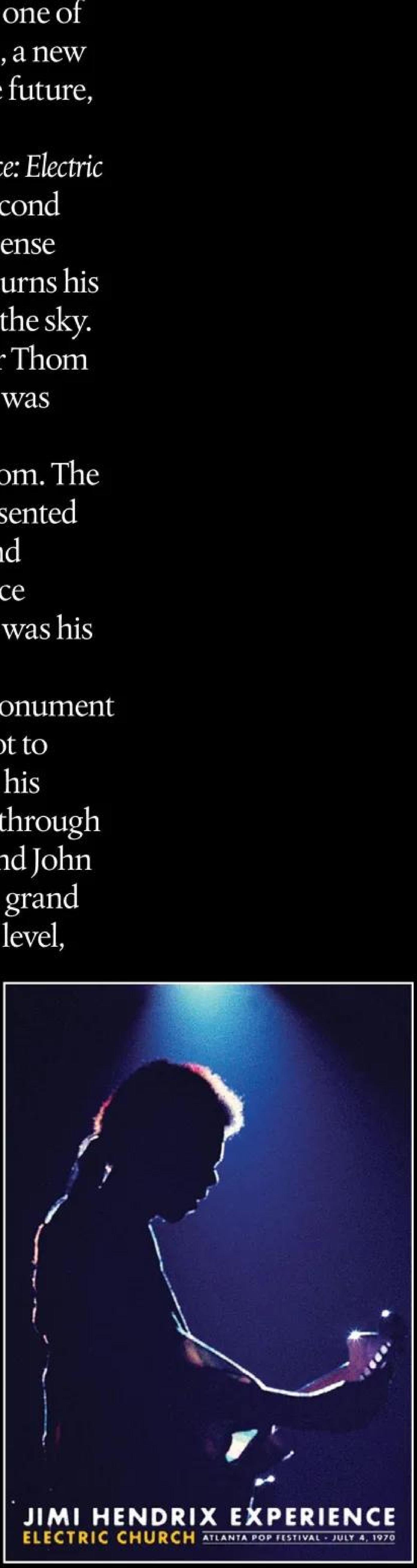
There's a lovely, fleeting moment in *Jimi Hendrix Experience: Electric Church* – a 2015 documentary film about his show at the second Atlanta International Pop Festival – that encapsulates this sense of celebration. Riffing on guitar in the blackness, Hendrix turns his head and glances up, just as a firework flower bursts red in the sky. "He was playing to the fireworks," recalls harmonica player Thom Doucette, also on the bill in The Allman Brothers Band. "It was gorgeous, man. Unbelievable. It was beautiful, it was Jimi."

Nothing messes with the truth quite like accepted wisdom. The Hendrix myth has it that Woodstock, in August '69, represented the pinnacle of his live work towards the end of his life. And that his Isle of Wight appearance in August 1970, long since commemorated with a series of audio and visual releases, was his next (and last) festival of any note.

Think again. If anything deserves to stand as a fitting monument to Hendrix's final months, it's Atlanta. "By the time Jimi got to Atlanta there was a new confidence building in him," says his engineer/producer Eddie Kramer. "He was ready to break through to the next stage of what he was aspiring to. Miles Davis and John Coltrane, both senior statesmen of jazz, were respected as grand musicians operating at another level. And Jimi was at that level, there's no question."

If *The Star-Spangled Banner* is the most enduring memory of Hendrix at Woodstock, it can be argued that Atlanta's rendition was far more meaningful. Woodstock's untidy scheduling had meant that Hendrix took to the stage at nine o'clock on Monday morning. By that point, most of the crowd had already gone home leaving him to play to a relatively small audience that ranged from 40,000 to 200,000, depending on which report you believe.

Atlanta was something else. Making his entrance at half past midnight, Hendrix played to 500,000 people, the overwhelming majority of whom were all too eager to show their appreciation. The Georgia locale, too, was a world away from upstate New York. Atlanta was still a segregated city with an unrepentant white governor. As such, it was a highly charged environment.



MAIN: GETTY

Atlanta also served as a microcosm of civil unrest in America. Only two months had passed since four students were gunned down by the US National Guard at Ohio's Kent State University during anti-Vietnam War protests. Eleven days later, police killed another two students at a demo against racial discrimination at Jackson State College in Mississippi. *Newsweek* were swift to declare that President Nixon was in crisis at home as well as abroad.

The dubiously named Honor America Day was set up to counteract the growing sense of national discord. Organised by the Reverend Billy Graham and comedian Bob Hope, and due to take place on the same Fourth of July near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, it was conceived as a way of uniting the populace. Dissenters were actively discouraged from turning up ("We want to see entertainment that's on the plus side," said Hope. "We don't want anything political."), while the jingoistic nature of the event was seen by many as little more than an excuse for a pro-war rally. Nearly 700 miles south, meanwhile, the Atlanta Festival was pooling a vast swathe of dissolute American youth.

"1970 was a very interesting time for all people involved, whether it was Jimi, kids in the US or political and civil rights," offers *Electric Church* director John McDermott, who's also an archivist of Experience Hendrix LLC. "You had Kent State, the war in Vietnam at its height and the draft. So that undercurrent was there and these kids wanted to be a part of it. Not everybody everywhere in America was on the same wavelength. And Atlanta was headlined by Jimi, a guy who'd served in the military and who'd faced civil rights oppression. It's an interesting dynamic."

Hendrix was a symbol of a new cultural shift, bringing people together through the power of music – what he called his Electric Sky Church. He was also canny enough to resist being drawn into making any direct statements about racial or socio-economic divides. Just prior to taking the stage at Atlanta, Hendrix was asked about the situation by reporters from local underground paper, *The Great Speckled Bird*. "I'm not thinking about black people or white people," he replied. "I'm thinking about the obsolete and the new."

Indeed, 1970 was progressing well for Hendrix. On New Year's Day he and his new Band Of Gypsys – comprising him, bassist Billy Cox and drummer Buddy Miles – had played the second of two nights at New York's Fillmore East. The shows (four in total) were a triumph, assimilating Hendrix's love of rock and hard blues into a fresh appreciation of funk and R&B. The songs themselves seemed freer and more subjective, exemplified by anti-war jam *Machine Gun* and *Message Of Love*, a plea for togetherness in times of turmoil. Issued in March, the album made the top ten both in the UK and US, where it would cling to the charts for over a year.

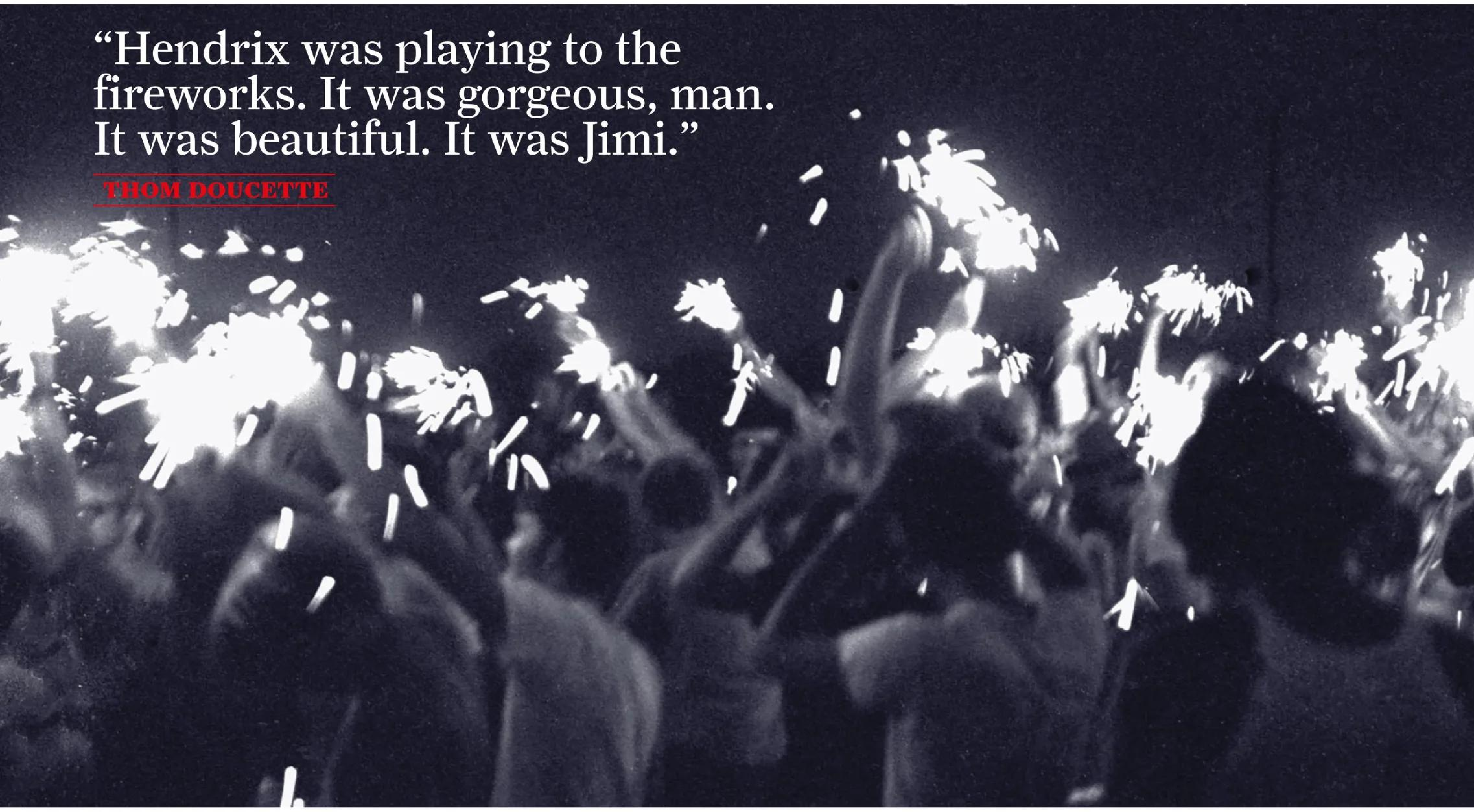
By April, with Mitch Mitchell in for Miles, the trio had hit the road on the *Cry Of Love* tour, billed as The Jimi Hendrix Experience. And less than a month prior to Atlanta, Hendrix and the band had begun to lay down tracks at his new recording facility, Electric Lady Studios, in Greenwich Village. A huge amount of money had been invested in the project by Hendrix and his manager Michael Jeffery, but he now had what he'd always craved: a state-of-the-art studio in which he could come and go as he pleased, free to realise the increasingly expansive musical ideas in his head.

"When I came on board the most important thing Jimi wanted to do was reach back to some of the riffs we used to play when we were first learning our instruments," says Billy Cox, who had first met Hendrix while serving in the US army in 1961. The pair then went on to play as sidemen for various big names on America's so-called chitlin' circuit during the early 60s. "It was a continual process because we were dedicated to the music. We loved coming up with new ideas. There were times when our riffs were so different that we said: 'Man, if they put that on wax, they would lock us up.' Because some of them were insane! Songs like *In From The Storm, Dolly Dagger* and *Freedom* came about through the usage of a lot of those little riffs. Jimi would say: 'Man, we're writing more music than I can write words to!'"

"Jimi had been incredibly focused at Electric Lady," recalls Kramer. "It was his second home and he was in a good state of mind. When we were in the studio doing *Cry Of Love* [released posthumously in 1971], which is where a lot of this material ended up, it seemed as if Jimi was searching for something. In a few places he actually found it, but in others it was in development. So it was exciting to witness the development of this new music. He went straight from the studio to play Atlanta, which gave him the chance to perform this stuff."

"By the time Jimi got to Atlanta he was ready to break through to the next stage."

EDDIE KRAMER



> “Hendrix was playing to the fireworks. It was gorgeous, man. It was beautiful. It was Jimi.”
>
> THOM DOUCETTE

The festival actually took place in the small enclave of Byron (pop. 1,368), some 100 miles south of Atlanta. Eager to build on the success of the previous year's gathering, promoter Alex Cooley set out styling the second Atlanta International Pop Festival after Woodstock, promising “three days of peace, love and music”. And, despite the opposition of state governor Lester Maddox, an old-school politician who kept an axe handle in his restaurant to deter those he considered undesirable, the event attracted people from all over the country.

Cooley coerced a local farmer into leasing his field, which sat next to the Middle Georgia Raceway. The arrangement bordered on the farcical. The farmer, remembers Cooley in the documentary, drank Scotch and milk all day, and produced gallons of moonshine from a still underneath the racetrack. The local sheriff had no officers available and presided over a tiny police station that doubled as a makeshift courthouse. There was one helicopter, but no walkie-talkies, rendering communication almost impossible. In order to help with security, the sheriff called in The Galloping Geese, a biker gang from Baton Rouge. There was one road in and one out, and the heat reached 100 degrees.

Into this chaos poured hordes of longhairs and hippies. It was apparent that the town wasn't equipped to handle the volume of people. Sensibly, the local officials decided to adopt a hands-off approach, monitoring the festival-goers without resorting to strong-arm tactics. People stripped naked in the searing sun, drugs were consumed openly and fire trucks were brought in to hose down the crowd when temperatures became too much.

Cooley, who'd anticipated around 100,000 people, surveyed the scene from a helicopter on the Friday afternoon. Only then did he realise how much he'd underestimated the turnout. “Traffic was backed up 90 miles to Atlanta,” he remembered. “I was scared to death.” Initial plans to charge 14 dollars for a three-day ticket were scrapped when people broke down the surrounding 20 acres of fencing, demanding instead that the festival be free. Maddox flew over the site later in the weekend and declared it a disaster area.

Aside from Hendrix and local heroes the Allmans, others on the bill included BB King, Grand Funk Railroad, Richie Havens, The Chambers Brothers, Mountain, Spirit and Johnny Winter. Hendrix arrived by helicopter at 10 in the evening to discover most of the place in total darkness. The limited capacities of Georgia's rural power system, it transpired, meant that the generators were unable to provide enough lights.

From the minute he took to the stage two-and-a-half hours later, it was clear that Hendrix and his new iteration of the Experience were enjoying themselves. “Jimi had played in the South when he was doing the chitlin' circuit and knew it really well,” observes Kramer. “And I think the audience was incredibly receptive, very laid back. There were no bad vibes. I got the feeling that he was very relaxed and the music speaks for itself. Jimi loved playing outside, particularly at night.”

The Experience gave them what they wanted. There's a riveting version of *Spanish Castle Magic* three songs in, building to a brilliant flurry of *Foxy Lady*, *Purple Haze* and *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*. The wild-man act of a few years earlier is gone. His old witch hat and military jacket have been replaced by headband and loose, kimono-ish shirt. This is a more serene, focused Hendrix, utterly locked into the surges and suggestions of the music. “He stands there, almost statuesque, hardly moving,” Kramer says of his stage demeanour. “He wants people to concentrate on him as a musician, as someone who's playing some serious shit. I think that was in his mind as he moved forward throughout 1970.”

The trio clearly have an extraordinary understanding on stage. This is perhaps best exemplified, oddly enough, by a rare hiccup during the intro to Bob Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower*. “After about two bars Jimi goes, ‘As I was saying...’ and I knew he was going to switch to the right key,” Cox recalls. “It could be just the way he moved his arm, but we knew him and could see what was happening next. Jimi was freer and more confident at that time, because he had his boys with him. Mitch was one of the greatest drummers I've ever worked with. Jimi knew that he could go out on a limb as far as he wanted to.”

“That final iteration of the band was one of the best in terms of what they each brought to the table,” adds Kramer. “Billy had his funkiness and R&B roots, while Mitch, interestingly enough, had adopted some of that bluesy R&B stuff from Buddy Miles in the Band Of Gypsys and melded it into this new version of the Jimi

Let me stand next to your fire: sparklers greet Jimi at the stroke of 12:30am.

ALAMY X2

Field of dreams: daytime scenes at Atlanta.

Hendrix Experience. In terms of the performance in the movie, I thought the communication was on such a high level. It only needed a little look or nod from Jimi. It was seamless, telepathic."

The real boon of the Atlanta show is Hendrix's decision to showcase a handful of songs from his recent Electric Lady sessions. There are captivating versions of *Room Full Of Mirrors*, *Freedom* and *Straight Ahead* (the last two would surface on *Cry Of Love*; the former was made to wait until 1997 for an official release, on compilation *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*). These songs – vivid, funky, pyretic – suggest that Hendrix was pushing at the frontiers of his own capabilities, ready to break through to a new creative phase.

So wrapped up is he in the show that Hendrix completely forgets that the fireworks are scheduled to happen. He finishes a rapturously received *Voodoo Child,* thanks the audience and begins to stalk off stage, only to be taken aside by one of the stage crew, who whispers into his ear. The cigarette lighters, like thousands of tiny candles, flicker in the crowd as Hendrix comes back on to do *Stone Free*. Then comes *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Even after he's long gone, the punters refuse to stop chanting his name.

Since dubbed the 'Southern Woodstock', the second Atlanta International Pop Festival proved to be the last. After weeks of clean-up operations, new state legislature ensured that it could never be repeated in Georgia. It also signalled the beginning of the end for mass music festivals across the US. "It was a great end to an era," says the Hampton Grease Band's Glenn Phillips, reflecting on Hendrix's performance. "It was a powerful moment."

One reason why Atlanta 1970 has been less celebrated than Woodstock or The Isle of Wight is it's lack of accessibility. Audio bootlegs of Hendrix's set have been doing the rounds for years, but the visuals have proved far more elusive.

Filmmaker Steve Rash, who went on to direct *The Buddy Holly Story* and *Can't Buy Me Love*, shot footage of the entire festival, but his plans to release a documentary were scuppered when his Hollywood distributors reneged on a deal. "In those days there were no ancillary markets, it was theatres or nothing else," Rash explains. "And by the next summer it was old news."

The film lay in his basement for a decade, then spent the next 20 years in his barn in Pennsylvania. It was only in 2000, after he saw an ad in *Popular Science* magazine from a company who specialised in restoring old 16mm film, that he began to think it was saveable. A lab in New York eventually salvaged around 80 per cent of the footage Rash shot (4,000 reels of the stuff), after a year's work.

"It was an absolute miracle," he says. "As well as the Hendrix material for Electric Church, I also have six hours of people like the Allman Brothers Band, Procol Harum, Grand Funk Railroad, John Sebastian and The Chambers Brothers."

In the meantime, Rash's compelling footage of Hendrix is a reminder of an artist whose best work may have still been ahead of him. Two months on from Atlanta, however, he was dead from a drugs overdose. "Before Jimi died he was talking to Chas [Chandler, ex-manager] again and I truly believe, having seen this Atlanta footage, that he was right there with the concept of where he was going next," posits Kramer. "He'd reached the crossroads."

"When you see things like Atlanta it just reminds you of the possibilities," adds John McDermott. "But in the end we lost a tremendous artist who, 45 years later, still inspires, intrigues and confounds. How many artists have that currency, that power?"

Billy Cox admits that "my whole world just shut down" when Hendrix died. He maintains that, "if Jimi had survived over the next ten years, the music would've been something wonderful. He had this concept of the Sky Church and Electric Church and had planned for this full manifestation. I saw his vision. He was global before the rest of the world became global. He was a future man. What makes Jimi just as relevant today is that he wrote in the now. Mozart, Handel, Coltrane, Gershwin, Hendrix: these guys all did that. I looked at Jimi as a cosmic messenger and he saw music as his means to bring people together."

"Jimi was global before the rest of the world became global. He was a future man."

BILLY COX

Jimi Hendrix's last show was not a triumphant finale but a fiasco marred by stormy weather, ill-health, bad drugs and rampaging Hell's Angels. **Scott Rowley** talked to some of the survivors.

Hendrix at the Love + Peace Festival, Germany, September 6, 1970. It would be his final gig.,

GETTY

"And the wind began to howl..."

"If I'm free, it's because I'm always running," said Hendrix when interviewed in *The Times*, September 5, 1970. On the same day, 24 hours before he played his last ever gig, UK music paper *Melody Maker* also published an interview with Jimi. "It's all turned full circle," he told interviewer Roy Hollingworth, "I'm back right now to where I started. I've given this era of music everything. I still sound the same, my music's still the same and I can't think of anything new to add to it in its present state... When the last American tour finished earlier this year, I just wanted to go away a while and forget everything. I wanted to just do recording, and see if I could write something. Then I started thinking. Thinking about the future. Thinking that this era of music – sparked off by The Beatles – had come to an end..."

The interview had taken place some days earlier: on August 29, the day before Jimi played the Isle Of Wight festival, an appearance that marked the first day of a week of intensive touring. Over the next seven days, Hendrix, Billy Cox and Mitch Mitchell would play six major gigs in three countries across Europe. They would have done more too, but the tour was cut short after concerns for the health of Cox: on September 1, someone had spiked his drink with LSD and he was still paranoid and exhausted over a week later. On September 9, the tour was cancelled and Cox returned to the States. Little did they realise then, but they'd already played their last gig together.

The Love + Peace Festival on the Isle of Fehmarn, off the coast of northern Germany in the Baltic Sea, was intended to be the European answer to Woodstock. Instead, it turned into a mini-Altamont. Overrun by a German biker gang, battered by storms, plagued by cancellations from big-name acts like Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the festival was descending into chaos, violence and arson by the time Hendrix got there on September 6 for his last live performance.

From his position onstage, UK student-turned-stagehand David Butcher was relatively sheltered from the chaos. But he knew something was wrong. "On the second day this English guy who was manager of one of the other bands decided to pull out," remembers Butcher. "The Hell's Angels were causing so much trouble – they were ransacking the office and giving free tickets to everybody. They weren't in charge of security, but basically they kind of took over and there was a lot of trouble, including gunfire. Machine-gun fire. For a while afterwards I wondered if we'd imagined it. But it was real." A statement hardly echoed by Hendrix's final words at the Isle of Wight festival: "Thank you very much. And peace and happiness and all the other good shit."

David Butcher's road to Fehmarn was a happy one, filled with cheeky blags and happy coincidences. A student at Keele University (where he was social secretary of the student union and responsible for booking bands), he was also a Hendrix nut. "I'd been a huge fan, right from the first time I heard *Hey Joe*. When I was at university, *Electric Ladyland* came out and I just used to listen to it every day. I still think that *Voodoo Child* - the long version with Stevie Winwood and Jack Casady - is one of the most amazing pieces of rock music ever."

In the summer of 1970, David and his friend Dave Philip travelled to Düsseldorf, where Philip's father was stationed in the army. With his parents away, the two made full use of the house and the times. "We were just hanging out there, getting herbally enhanced, when we saw a poster for this festival in Fehmarn. We didn't have any money, so we sat down at this typewriter and we concocted this letter to the festival organisers saying that we were passionate about music – which was true – and that we were doing a thesis on music as a unifying force and visiting loads of festivals."

They fell for it: a few days later, a couple of backstage passes arrived in the post. The two hitchhiked all the way up to Fehmarn. "We got there the night before, on the third of September. We were absolutely exhausted. It was really cold and wet, and we'd been hitchhiking for a day and a half, and we just found a spot on the grass to lie down, got into our sleeping bags and crashed out. In the morning we woke up, and we were surrounded by cars! We'd crashed out in what was the middle of the car park area and during the night hundreds of cars had appeared around us..."

Jimi's journey to Fehmarn hadn't been filled with as much good fortune. Hendrix hadn't wanted to come to Europe in the first place, but manager Michael Jeffery had convinced him that his new Electric Lady Studios needed an injection of cash – the answer was a short tour that began at the Isle ➜

Jimi arriving at Fehmarn for his last performance.

of Wight festival and continued in Denmark, Sweden and Germany.

Jimi arrived in London on August 27, conducting a string of interviews, before heading to the organised chaos that was Isle of Wight and probably the largest single audience of his career. Around half a million people witnessed him struggling with technical problems (the amps picking up radio signals), the effects of a cold, exhaustion (the band didn't actually appear onstage until 2am on Monday 31) and whatever combination of drugs and alcohol he was juggling at the time.

Less than 24 hours later they were playing a gig at an amusement park in Stockholm, Sweden, with Jimi insulting an audience crying out for the hits ("Fuck you, fuck you – come up and play guitar") and appearing weary with the whole process ("Ah, let me tune my guitar there again… oh, what the hell, you don't want to know…"). The Swedish promoter had allegedly demanded that Hendrix play for no more than an hour so that the audience could use the nearby funfair, claiming that he'd make more money from the fair than the gig. Justifiably offended – and apparently leaving the stage at one point to argue with the promoter – Jimi got his revenge by playing for 110 minutes.

"This song is dedicated to all the girls who get laid," he said before the final number, *Foxy Lady*, evidently enjoying himself. "And, erm, all the little girls back there with those little yellow, orange, pink and turquoise panties that they keep throwing on the stage. It's close to Mother's Day – anybody that wanna be a mother, come backstage."

The next day, the band – billed everywhere as the Jimi Hendrix Experience, something that Hendrix seemed to have given up fighting – travelled to Gothenburg for an outdoor gig. During the day he gave an interview to a Swedish newspaper who asked him about a contribution he had made to the Martin Luther King Memorial Fund. "Would you rather I gave it to the Ku Klux Klan?" asked Jimi. "In the USA you have to decide which side you're on. You're either a rebel or like Frank Sinatra." His idealism questioned by the straights, his commitment questioned by his audiences, he felt exhausted. "I'm tired of lying down and I feel mentally hollowed," he told the interviewer.

"IN THE USA, YOU'RE EITHER A REBEL OR LIKE FRANK SINATRA…"

Jimi Hendrix

If the gig that night was better than the previous one, it still wasn't enough to impress a visiting Chas Chandler – the man who had managed Hendrix to stardom but parted ways with him the year before. "He was wrecked," Chandler said. "He'd start a song, get into the solo section and then he wouldn't even remember what song they were playing at the time. It was really awful to watch." At a party after the gig, Billy Cox's drink was spiked and the drug-free bass player experienced a nightmarish bad trip that, combined with the stress of a hectic schedule, over the next few days put him close to a nervous breakdown.

The whole camp was at the end of its tether. "I'm not sure I'll live to be 28 years old," Jimi told an interviewer the next day. "At the moment I feel I have nothing more to give musically. I will not be around on this planet any more, unless I have a wife and children – otherwise I've got nothing to live for."

With Jimi in the grip of a feverish cold, that night the band played in Aarhus, Denmark, cutting short his set after only three numbers (he had only ever stopped a gig once before: at the last Band Of Gypsys performance at Madison Square Garden in January that year). A girlfriend, Kirsten Nefer, recalled that when she met him earlier that day he was "staggering" and "acting in a funny way", telling her, "I don't want you to see me like this". Nefer says that Jimi was unable to even tune his guitar before going onstage. Helped on to the stage by roadies, he was escorted off again minutes later, Mitch Mitchell covering his exit with a long drum solo.

Backstage, the venue's manager, Otto Fewser, claimed that "Hendrix collapsed into my arms and we sat him upon a chair. He was cold – cold

GETTY X 2

"Jimi seemed pretty relaxed. He was probably stoned a bit," says David Butcher.

fever – then they asked for cocaine. 'We have no cocaine,' I said. Hendrix could not play more."

The gig cancelled, Hendrix headed back to his hotel where he spoke once again to Anne Bjorndal, a journalist who had interviewed him earlier. "I love reading fairytales," he told her. "Hans Christian Andersen and *Winnie The Pooh*. Fairytales are full of fantasy and they appeal to your imagination." Bjorndal claims that Jimi then started crawling around, 'acting out' Winnie The Pooh. "Winnie The Pooh is searching," she quoted him as saying. "It's winter and the tracks are easy to follow and, oh, now the seasons have changed. I've lost the track…"

Interviewer: How do you get your inspiration?
Jimi Hendrix: Pardon – say it again?
I: How do you get your inspiration?
JH: From the people.
August 30, Isle of Wight.

In the very early morning of September 3, Mitch Mitchell got a phone call telling him that his wife had given birth to a baby girl. Mitchell chartered a flight back to London, taking Billy Cox with him, meeting up with Jimi later that day in Copenhagen for a blistering gig at the city's KB Hallen hall. Over the worst of his cold, Hendrix had spent the day with Nefer at her parents' house and hit the stage apparently invigorated. In a review of the concert, Danish newspaper *Politiken* raved: 'Jimi was tired and ill in Aarhus, but was so high in Copenhagen that this was true energy, true adrenaline that ran through his fingers, through the guitar and into all of us… As a warrior of love, he stood dressed in many colours and was the best guitarist rock'n'roll music can offer.'

The band then flew on to Berlin to perform at the Super Concert '70, an indoor festival at the city's Deutschlandhalle with Procol Harum, Ten Years After, Canned Heat and more. Interviewed by American Forces radio before the gig, he was asked if he thought there would ever be a festival as successful as Woodstock. "Well, I don't know," said Jimi. "It's pretty hard for this sound to get to all those people in such a big crowd. Like, if we had smaller crowds you can really get next to 'em more, you know?" How did he feel about playing in front of 400,000 people? "That's what I mean," he said. "It's just too big. You know you're not getting through to all of them…" After a strong performance in Berlin, the band flew to Hamburg then caught a train to Grossenbrode in the north. On the train, Jimi wanted to lie down so he broke into a locked sleeper car. "The guard freaked out and stopped the train and threatened to throw us off," remembered tour manager Gerry Stickells. The situation was smoothed over and the band arrived in Fehmarn on the Saturday afternoon. "We got there mid-afternoon," said Mitch Mitchell, "and were supposed to be on at eight. By about six we heard this wind and then it turned into a gale. We knew by then there were other problems as well. The usual equipment trouble plus Hell's Angels with guns."

Promoters Christian Berthold, Helmut Ferdinand and Tim Sievers had timed their event to coincide with the Isle Of Wight Festival (with the aim of snagging some major acts, including Hendrix, then at the height of his popularity in Germany after his appearance in the Woodstock movie) but they hadn't counted on some of the same elements that had disrupted the UK festival to derail theirs: rogue bikers, overcrowding, bad weather and cancellations soured the Love + Peace attitude of the 30,000-strong crowd.

"If you think the Isle Of Wight was a mess, you should have been to Fehmarn," comments Ford Crull. Now a New York-based artist, Crull was 17 at the time and had heard about Fehmarn while at the Isle Of Wight. "I was on my way to Sweden to meet a girl I'd met," he says. En route he took a detour, hooked up with British folk rockers Fotheringay (Sandy Denny's band after Fairport Convention) and found himself hired as a stage hand and enjoying a bill that included the Faces, Sly & The Family Stone, Cactus, Procol Harum, Ginger Baker's Air Force and more.

"Fehmarn had a good line-up, but it was just chaos," says Crull today. "Sandy Denny kept getting an electric shock from the mic. Whoever built the stage was an idiot. There were gales, so the sea just kept blowing on stage. The whole place was wet and so she kept getting shocks."

Crull remembers another potentially dangerous experience as he accompanied Rod Stewart and the stage manager over to the business office to collect their payment. "They just had suitcases packed with cash to give the bands – in US dollars too. We had to walk back through everyone with these cases packed with I don't know how many thousands of dollars. I'm sure if the bikers had known, they would have stormed the office." (That wasn't the only excess. Back in the Faces' camp, Crull pulled out his lump of hash. The Faces pulled out theirs. "I had an ounce," he says. "They must have had a pound.")

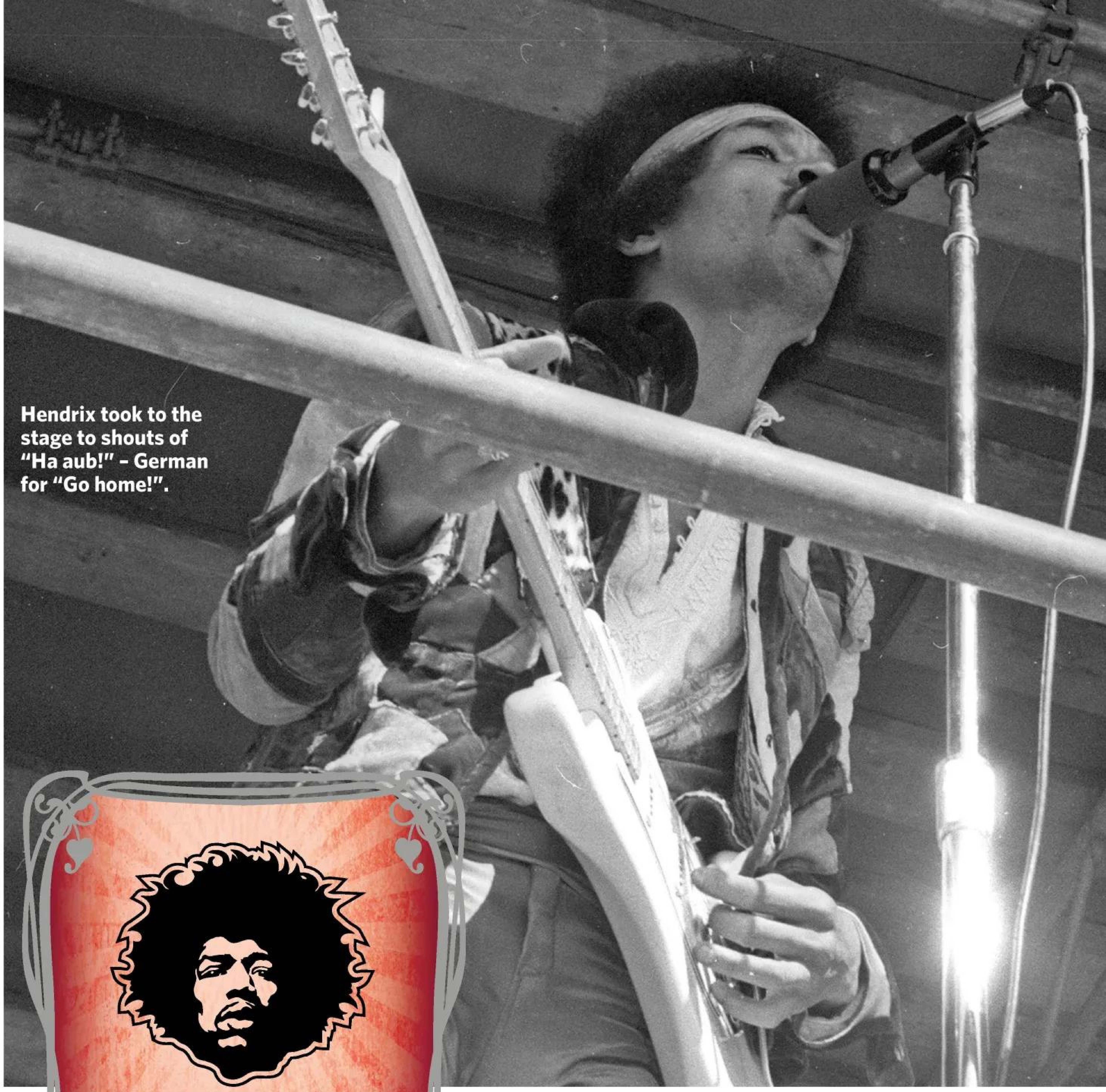
David Butcher had also been hired as stage hand. "One of the managers of a number of the English bands including Fotheringay, I think, had paid us to be stage hands," he says. "We were just there and we seemed keen and we spoke English and he said, 'Can you help us out?' All we had to do was help the roadies and make sure there weren't too many hangers-on. It was one of those revolving stages, so the challenge was, when the guys came up and got on to the backstage bit, they needed peace and quiet and space so they could tune up. We got drinks – anything that was needed.

"We were getting paid the equivalent of £12 a day, including food and wine, so this being 1970 we were doing pretty well. On day two of the festival, this guy who'd employed us appeared in the late afternoon. He had a huge wad of German marks and he said, 'Listen you guys – I've got the cash for the bands that have played. I've got a couple of bands that are due to play later, but I'm taking them home cos this is falling apart. The Angels are ruining the whole thing. The cash isn't there – I'm outta here.' He said, 'What are you guys doing? Are you staying on?' I said, 'Yeah, I'm staying on because of Hendrix.' He said, 'Well, that's up to you – my advice is don't stay because it's getting dangerous. But if you're staying, you can take over. Do you want to be stage manager?' I said 'Yes', and he got out his stage manager pass and stuck it on me. And that was that. We'd gone from nowhere to getting free press passes, then backstage passes, then all of a sudden I was stage manager."

Hendrix was due to take the stage at 8pm, but when Gerry Stickells visited the site, a force-five gale and torrential rain convinced him that it would be a big mistake. Instead Jimi stayed where he was in the Hotel Dania in Puttgarden on the north of the island. Home to most of the musicians appearing at the festival, the bar was drunk dry.

David Butcher ended up there too: "My memory's hazy, for good reason, but we landed up in this bedroom and there were people everywhere, just crashed out. Alvin Lee of Ten Years After was in there. Someone had a pair of bongos and there was lots of marijuana going around. I just remember feeling very mellow and Alvin Lee was strumming away and someone was playing bongos and someone was singing – and we just fell asleep where we were."

Billy Cox wasn't having nearly as good a time of it. "Billy had kind of a breakdown," Stickles told Tony Brown for his 1997 book, *The Final Days Of Jimi Hendrix* (reviewed page 118). "It was part of my job to nurse him through it, to get the date over with. But he was severely paranoid about what was going on, you know. This whole thing was going to collapse and everybody was going to be killed and God knows what else. I had to sit on the side of the stage and stuff like that, so he could see me all the time. Everybody was feeling bad at that time. When somebody's like that, it permeates through the whole thing. But this was the last show – 'Let's just do it, get it over with and get out of here' – and that's what happened."



Hendrix took to the stage to shouts of "Ha aub!" – German for "Go home!".

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"I WANT A BIG BAND THAT I CAN CONDUCT AND WRITE FOR – PAINT PICTURES OF EARTH AND SPACE. READY FOR THE NEXT TRIP..."
Jimi Hendrix

"I'm tired. Not physically. Mentally. I'm going to grow my hair back, it's something to hide behind. No, not to hide. I think I may grow it long because my daddy used to cut it like a skinned chicken." – Jimi Hendrix, The Times, September 5, 1970.

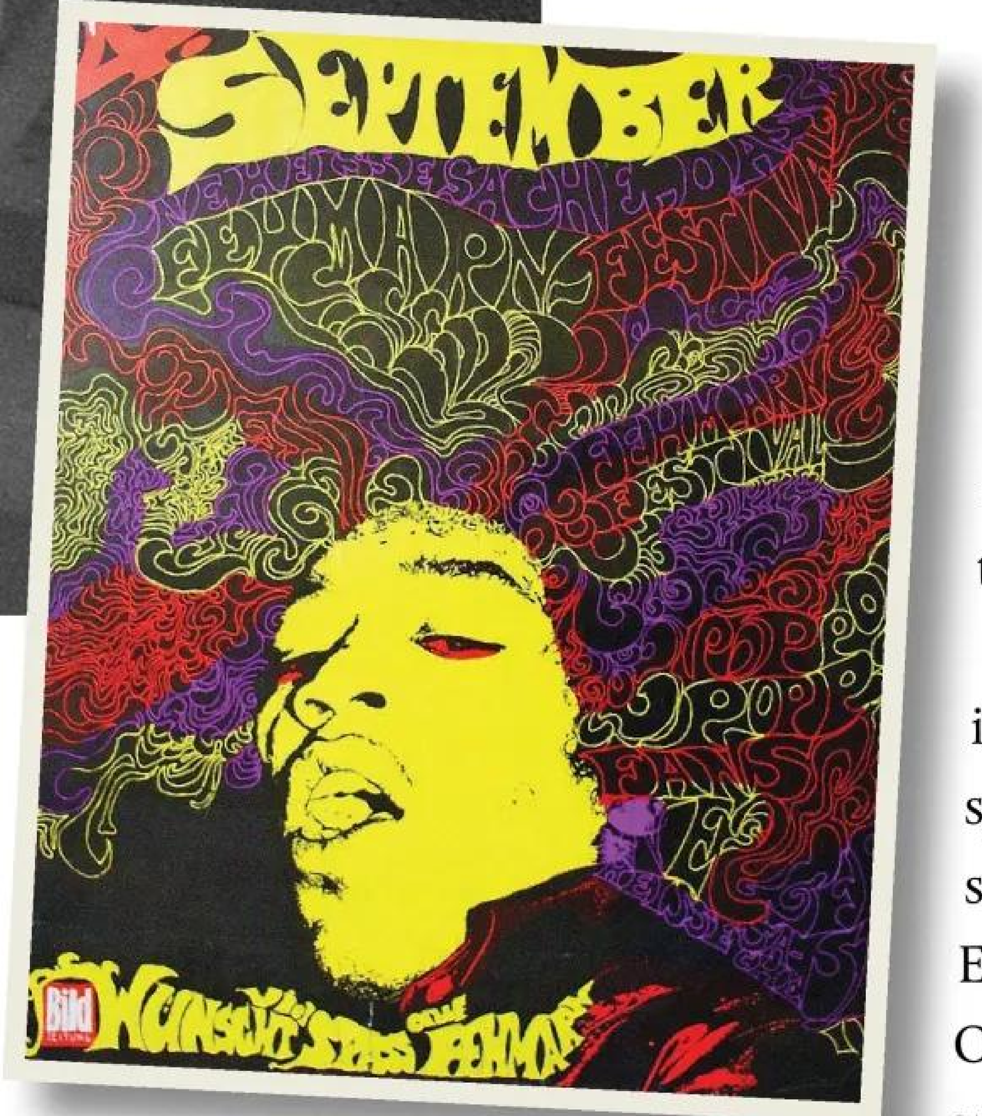
The morning after that interview was published, the band arrived on site at 11, having been rescheduled for midday. No sooner had they got there than Stickells was hit on the head by a plank of wood with six-inch nails in it. Despite the tensions, the band posed for German photographer Gernot Piltz, Jimi even rolling around and laughing on the grass backstage. "Maybe that was before he realised the situation there," says Ford Crull. "When I saw them, Jimi and Mitchell and Cox weren't even talking to each other. And he and Mitchell were so skinny. Mitchell's legs were as thin as my arms."

It was David Butcher's job to make sure that the band were taken care of. "I didn't really pick up on the turmoil that was obviously going on," says Butcher. "Jimi seemed pretty relaxed. He was probably stoned a bit. There were one or two joints being passed around. Very friendly, gentle guy – so laidback and sensitive... They had one or two caravans at the back where the stars stayed for the hour or so before they went on. We made sure he was okay and settled in the caravan then we went back to the stage and made sure the roadies had everything they needed. Later he came out of the caravan and came backstage and then we kept everyone away so that he

could tune up and practise." Butcher seized the opportunity to introduce himself as social secretary for Keele University and ask Jimi if he'd come and play there. "Sure, talk to Gerry Stickells about it," said Hendrix.

At around 1pm, the Experience took to the stage to boos and jeers and shouts of "Hau ab!" (German for "go home"). Captured on an 'official bootleg' release from Experience Hendrix's Dagger Records imprint (*Live At The Isle Of Fehmarn*), Jimi takes it in his stride, being first gracious ("Peace anyway, peace"), then comical (joining in with the booing), before confronting the crowd. A rare clip of the festival on YouTube shows Jimi walking to the mic, arms outstretched: "I don't give a fuck if you boo," he shrugs, "as long as you boo in tune, you mothers..."

The booing ceases and he then placates them by introducing the band and adding, "We'd like to play some music for you and, er, we hope you can dig it. Because we're sorry we couldn't come on last night, but it's just unbearable man. We couldn't make it together like that, you know."



From there, the band launch into Killing Floor. With amazing symmetry, this was the opening song of the Jimi Hendrix Experience's first ever gig, on October 18, 1966, in Paris. At the end of the song, there was a big cheer and no more boos – the audience are already won over. Then it was *Spanish Castle Magic* and *All Along The Watchtower*. David Butcher was standing at the side of the stage when he was given one more responsibility. "The guy who was controlling the sound took a break, so I was sort of delegated to look after the sound – but hopefully just stand there and not do anything, cos I didn't know how to work the desk.

"He was halfway through *All Along The Watchtower* when he looked round at me. He's doing this great solo and then he does that amazing thing where he stops playing with his left hand – he's just got his right hand on the frets and the solo is magically continuing – and I'm sort of mesmerised by this when I realise he's looking at me. He's walking towards me and he's saying, 'More drums, man'. So there I am, trying to find the right fader... It was a wonderful moment because I did actually find the right levers and just moved them up a bit and he kind of smiled and winked, so I obviously did the right thing..."

From there it was *Hey Joe*, *Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)*, *Message To Love* and *Foxy Lady*. As the band played the next number, *Red House*, the weather turned foul again. Umbrellas went up and people huddled under tarpaulins. Jimi laughed and improvised lyrics: "Yeah, well I got a bad, bad feeling," he sang before laughing: "The weather is telling you something."

"It was cold and it was raining, with a very cold wind," remembers Butcher. "The rain was coming in and he was standing there, risking being electrocuted, but just carrying on, you know? He didn't move back from the front of the stage, he just carried on. It was quite amazing, really."

But the trouble wasn't over. "From my position onstage I could see fights breaking out as Jimi approached the end of his set," says Butcher. "I'm sure Jimi saw them too, but he was powerless to do anything about it." The last two songs Hendrix ever played live were the ever popular *Purple Haze* and a suitably stormy version of *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*. Fittingly, coincidentally, ironically, the final lines of the song – and the final lines that Hendrix would ever sing to the world – are as follows: "If I don't see you no more in this world/I'll meet you in the next one and don't be late, don't be late."

"Thank you. Goodbye. Peace!" shouted Jimi. David Butcher escorted the band down the wooden steps at the back of the stage and they got in a helicopter bound for Hamburg. Butcher decided it was time for him to leave too. "We weren't expecting to be paid anything for the final day, so we were gone. We had a good supply of marijuana. All this stuff was on sale – they had guys from Holland out in the crowd, with everything set out on a table, clearly labelled – 'Whatever you wanna try, try'. There were no police at all. I s ppose it was on an island and they just thought, 'Let them get on with it'. By the time we left, the Angels were rampaging the stage, just tearing everything down, just dismantling everything."

Ford Crull was in the thick of it. He and one of Fotheringay's roadies commandeered a van and piled the band's gear safely inside. "The bikers realised they weren't gonna get paid and they were running amuck. When the rioting started, the German police appeared and they basically had a gun fight with these guys. Our van had the windows smashed and I held up a tarpaulin so he could see while the rains came blasting in. When we got to the hotel where the band was, Sandy Denny gave me a big kiss for saving their stuff and they offered me a job. She was a real angel."

As Hendrix left the site, a German anarchist rock band called Ton Steine Scherben took to the stage. Infamous in Germany for songs like *Keine Macht Für Niemand* (No Power For No One) and *Macht Kaputt Was Euch Kaputt Macht* (Destroy What Destroys You), the appearance only added to their infamy: as they played, the stage went up in flames. To some in the audience it looked like Ton Steine Scherben had lit the match, giving them even more underground cred. The era of Love + Peace was truly at an end. Less than two weeks later, on September 18 – two months short of his 28th birthday – Jimi Hendrix was dead. A week or so after the festival, David Butcher was "in an agent's office somewhere in Kensington," telling him about the conversation he'd had with Jimi about playing at Keele. "This guy was saying how he could liaise with Jimi's agent and make it happen. And it was at that moment that the door opened and the secretary walked in, in tears, telling us he'd died."

The chaos of the preceding weeks made his death seem almost inevitable, but Hendrix wasn't weary of life – just life in the Experience. "A lot us hung out at night by the campfires backstage at Isle of Wight," says Ford Crull. "Jimi and Miles Davis were around one, talking about working together – my friend heard them. Jimi wanted to be taken seriously as a musician; he didn't want to play the guitar with his teeth... I think his handlers were almost forcing him to cash in, and he wanted off."

Certainly Hendrix had been optimistic just days before, telling the Melody Maker, "Something new has got to come and Jimi Hendrix will be there. I want a big band. I don't mean three harps and 14 violins, I mean a big band full of competent musicians that I can conduct and write for. And with the music we will paint pictures of Earth and space, so that the listener can be taken somewhere... They are getting their minds ready now. Like me, they are going back home, getting fat and making themselves ready for the next trip." He never made it.

Thanks to David Butcher and Ford Crull (www.fordcrull.com). Many of the quotes used in this piece were taken from Tony Brown's **Hendrix: The Final Days** *– thanks to Steve Jackson and Chris Charlesworth at Omnibus Press.*

Room Full Of Mirrors

the mysterious death of JIMI HENDRIX

Was Jimi Hendrix murdered by a manager with an MI5 past and debts to the Mafia? Hendrix biographer **Harry Shapiro** talks to former roadie James 'Tappy' Wright and reconsiders the mysteries surrounding Jimi Hendrix's death...

It's February 1973 at the London apartment of Jimi Hendrix's manager, Mike Jeffery. The only other person present is James 'Tappy' Wright, a softly-spoken Geordie who has been working for Jeffrey since the early 60s in Newcastle when the latter was a club owner and manager of The Animals. The night is wearing on, the ashtrays are full, the bourbon is flowing.

Mike owned the rights to *Jimi Plays Berkeley*, a film of Hendrix's May 1970 concert at the Berkeley Community Center in San Francisco, widely regarded as among one of Jimi's finest performances. After Jimi died, Mike had the idea that he would tour the film supported by live acts in his stable, Cat Mother and Jimmy and Vella. Because so many people who wanted to see Jimi never had the chance, watching him perform in a film coming out through a rock sound system in a cinema was the next best thing and according to Tappy, the tours of the UK and Europe were a huge success. So now they sit planning to take the idea to the States and this leads to a general reminiscence about Jimi and his last days.

"I can remember this as if it were yesterday," says Tappy today, sitting in London's Groucho club, remembering the night that Jeffery apparently confes-

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to Hendrix's murder. "As we are talking, Mike began to get very agitated and pale. 'I had no bloody choice, I had to do it'. 'What are you talking about?' 'You know exactly what I'm talking about. It was either that or I'd be broke or dead'.

"I have to say that it did confirm suspicions that I had, that a lot of people had, only everybody was too scared to come forward and say anything. He was telling me, I didn't ask and to be honest I really didn't want to hear this."

Mike gave away few details and Tappy didn't press him further: "All he said was he got a few of his friends – I don't know who they were, just some villains that Mike knew from up north and it was just booze down the windpipe. Like in that film *Get Carter*.

"I don't know why he told me. I think though, if you've done a crime it's a natural thing to want to tell somebody – it's hard to keep it to yourself. And he did know that he could trust me. I certainly knew what he was capable of – and I definitely believed him."

> "I had no choice. I had to do it. It was either that or I'd be broke or dead."
>
> **Hendrix manager Mike Jeffery**

Barely a month later, Mike Jeffery was dead. Flying back from Majorca, his Iberian Airways DC-9 flight was in a mid-air collision over France. There were no survivors. Mike was terrified of flying and was in the habit of making several reservations at once and then choosing his flight at the last minute to escape the fates. But on 5th March 1973 his luck ran out and the full story behind his shocking confession died with him.

Tappy admits he sought no corroborative evidence then or since for Mike's story: "Whoever else was involved was still out there and they might have thought Mike told me everything. So I kept my mouth shut, although I did tell my close friend, Bob Levine who was part of Jimi's management team in New York. He told me to disappear."

Eventually Tappy moved back up north and became a club owner. In the early 80s rock manager Rod Weinberg reformed The Animals and Tappy found himself back in the business. "I asked Tappy to get involved because I needed somebody to keep Eric and Chas apart," says Rod. From their chats about the past came the idea for the book which they started ten years ago.

So what motive could Mike Jeffery possibly have had for killing his major source of income and the biggest rock star in the world?

Flashback to September 1966. The Animals had broken up over the summer. Bassist Chas Chandler was sick of the road and wanted to move into production. Keith Richards' girlfriend Linda Keith had persuaded Chas to come see a young guitar player strut his stuff down at the Café Wha in Greenwich Village. Impressed with what he saw, Chas tried to cut a deal for Jimi Hendrix even before he brought him back to the UK. Nobody was interested. He had no more luck in the early days in London as he showcased his new find around the club scene. Everyone was blown away. Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Pete Townshend were in collective shock, but still no done deals. Chas quickly realised he needed a business partner. He turned to The Animals manager, Mike Jeffery. Nobody in the band had trusted Mike, believing he had devised an offshore tax scam simply as a way of stealing all their money. But John Hillman, the lawyer who administered the offshore company in the Bahamas called Yameta, is adamant that, "The Animals without Mike Jeffery were nothing." Mike was a sharp operator with connections – and now Chas was on the other side, Mike's side.

Mike Jeffery was born in south London in March 1933. The son of two postal workers, Mike had an average school career, but was quite sporty. He was called up for National Service in 1951 and then signed on as a full-time professional soldier. He was drafted into the Intelligence Corps and from then on, not surprisingly, his army career becomes a bit murky. He later told tales of undercover work in Egypt during the Suez Crisis in 1956, counter-espionage work against the Russians and general murder and mayhem in foreign parts. Some of this 'Austin Powers – Man of Mystery' routine may have been employed to impress (and frighten) the young musicians he later had under his wing. But his father Frank did say that Mike could speak fluent Russian, that much of his army career was spent in 'civvies' and that when he was at home, he rarely spoke about what he did.

But probably his crowning achievement in the service of Queen and Country, was to make serious money selling old newspapers to British soldiers stationed in Egypt. Troops abroad are always desperate for news from home. Mike found out that in Cairo (off limits to soldiers) newspapers were on sale that were only a few days old. Strictly against the rules, he commandeered a truck and began shipping piles of papers back to the base. He was caught, but cut his commanding officer a slice of the action and still had enough money to start up in Newcastle as a club owner, but not before he earned himself a degree at Newcastle University. So no stranger to danger, Mike proved himself intelligent, charming and street-smart.

In October 1966, Jimi, Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell signed a production contract with Chas and Mike, but on 1st December, Jimi alone signed a four-year management contract with Mike. Not only were Noel and Mitch excluded – even Chas' name didn't appear until some time later. Right from the outset, Noel and Mitch were only ever regarded by Mike and Yameta as 'employees' and whatever Jimi might have said to them verbally, this state of affairs was reflected in the contracts. For Mike, Jimi was the star and he wanted as few obstacles in the way of his investment as possible. Eventually they signed to Track Records in the UK, but Mike's big coup was signing with Warner Brothers in January 1967. Aside from the recording contract itself, he negotiated a $20,000 promotion budget, unheard of for an unknown artist's debut album, and he wangled an exclusion clause for any soundtrack recordings – something Warners would regret later. On top of that, Warners agreed not to sign Jimi directly, but instead to sign for the services of Yameta which contracted to supply the 'master recordings of Jimi Hendrix or the Jimi Hendrix Experience' to Warners – and in doing so Yameta retained 'exclusive and perpetual ownership of all masters recorded'. Not even The Beatles or the Stones owned their masters.

So with the substantial backing of a major US label, the Jimi Hendrix Rock Machine began to roll. Like Cream, the band spent more and more time in the States in search of the big bucks. The tours got longer, the concert fees rose, especially when Mike arranged for self-promotion of the band. Instead of dealing with dozens of different promoters all over the States, they dealt with a handful and paid them a percentage to promote the band. And he also wised-up very early on, to the earning power of merchandising – so more cash for the Experience coffers.

But by mid-1968, cracks were appearing in the organisation. Jimi knew he had Chas and Mike to thank for everything, but he was beginning to resent what he saw as Chas' grip on his creativity. This came to a head during the recording of *Electric Ladyland* at the Record Plant in New York where Jimi was bringing in extra musicians to move away from the trio format. Chas also got cheesed off about the drugs, especially LSD – and the growing band of groupies and hangers-on that infested the recording sessions. Chas decided to cut his ties as Jimi's producer and went back to England, although for the time being, he retained his management interests. Jimi too was getting tired of Mike's insistence on the need for constant touring – and moreover, the audience expectation that he would smash his amps or set fire to the guitar and the general boredom of playing the same songs every night. As he said later, he was fed up 'playing the clown'.

Matters came to a head in the summer of 1969. The band's performances became unpredictable depending on Jimi's mood. Sometimes exhilarating and powerful, other times scrappy and ill-prepared with Jimi, Noel and Mitch hardly looking at each other. Noel left, Billy Cox was brought in and Jimi repaired to a rented house in Shokan, upstate New York to consider the future. Although Mitch stayed on, Jimi began talking about Sky Church Music and gathered around him a whole group of new musicians of ➜

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Jeffery's management contract with Hendrix would have expired at the end of 1970.

By the end of the 60s Jimi was tired of the outrageous antics that had made his name.

GETTY RIGHT: FUTURE

varying quality who played a patchy performance at Woodstock in front of the 30,000 people left on the Monday morning after everybody had gone home. Then Jimi went off the road and Mike Jeffery went nuts. Despite all the success, the cash was running out.

Although Mike had struck great recording deals, actually getting the money out of the record companies was the devil's own job – they were always months or even years in arrears. So the real money was in touring – often thousands of dollars in suitcases and paper bags. But once Jimi left the Woodstock stage on 18th August 1969, he turned his back on touring until 25th April 1970 and the start of the 'Cry Of Love' tour.

So the income was falling while the expenses were going off the radar. Jimi had no concerns for studio costs – he spent hours and hours just jamming and experimenting. *Electric Ladyland* alone cost $60,000. The band always spent heavily; limos, hotels, paying the bills for the damaged and the doomed who hung round Jimi's neck, and who he could never refuse. He loved fast cars (although he was as blind as a bat) and one weekend bought nine guitars. Mike was no stranger to spending either. As a character on the music scene, he was always felt something of an outsider. With his perennial prescription dark glasses and long black coat, he cultivated an air of menace, but he desperately wanted to be accepted among the American rock management elite, men like Dylan's manager Albert Grossman. Partly as a way of getting closer to Jimi, he took on more of the hippy look and dropped lots of acid. In the summer of '69, he bought an expensive house among the hip rock community in upstate New York and rented the house at Shokan for Jimi.

Then there was the financial black hole that was Electric Lady Studios. Mike had great success as a club owner in the UK and Spain and tried to persuade Jimi to invest in a club in New York. This evolved into the idea of building a state of the art studio. Nice idea, shame about the location. In his book, Tappy recalls that 'New York's Eighth Street was right in the heart of Mafia territory; there were already four Italian clubs in the neighbourhood and the mob were not keen of having a rock star with Jimi's reputation setting up shop in their midst and bringing a lot of unwanted attention into their area'.

Against that backdrop, there were endless problems getting the necessary building permits and then the site was flooded after they discovered they were building right on top of an underground river. And as shrewd as Mike might have been, he could also be impulsive. When it came to equipping the studio, instead of trying to arrange instalment plans for purchasing, attorney Howard Krantz says 'Jeffery would just…buy the item outright' adding to the cash flow problems. So even though Mike secured a whopping loan from Warner's, the original budget of $500,000 soon became a distant memory.

Mike took the very dangerous step of borrowing money from the Mob. Bob Levine, who had worked for Sinatra, knew these guys and would act as the go-between. Tappy says he would "drive up to these big houses with gates, just like you see in the movies. Bob would tell me to wait in the car and then he'd come out with a package."

The Godfather and *The Sopranos* have embedded gangsters in our popular mythology, so it is easy to forget that the Mafia are real and really do hurt people who cross them. Added to which Mike had left some unfinished business in London: Electric Lady studio manager Jim Marron remembers Jeffery telling him he owed someone $20,000: "They sent a guy over to kill [Mike] if he didn't pay. That won his respect" – and he paid up.

And if that wasn't enough, he had the American Inland Revenue Service (IRS) on his tail. Jimi never benefited from the Yameta tax haven because he was a US citizen; only UK citizens could afford paying tax in this way. Nor could Mike legally bring in any money from the Bahamas without the IRS getting their chunk. So Bob Levine recalls Mike's assistants Trixie Sullivan and Kathy Eberth, arriving in New York with wodges of cash stuffed in bras and boots. The IRS was threatening to impound Electric Lady if Mike didn't start making some regular payments. So he was treading a very fine line financially and was perpetually in need of cash injections to keep the boat afloat.

Forward planning was not his strong suit, says concert promoter Ron Terry: "[Mike] planned from minute to minute. If he was broke, he reacted and that put pressure on his artist."

Mike was also becoming very concerned not only about his worsening relationship with Jimi, but about those he saw as posing a threat to his position and his income. The music business was and still is, a hotbed of suspicion and paranoia. Maybe because of his involvement in Cold War activities, Mike's sense of paranoia was more finely tuned than most. He was always wary of those who were much closer to Jimi than he would ever be and often tried to engineer ways of dividing and ruling. Early on, he applied this technique to Chas and Record Plant staff like producer Eddie Kramer and engineer Gary Kellgren. But from 1969, Mike's paranoia became more focused and intense. He even bugged Bob Levine's office to keep track of what was going on, so distant was he feeling from Jimi and his circle. The band's PR agent in the States, Michael Goldstein observed that Mike "would stop at nothing to ensure the success of his artists, but he couldn't relate to them personally".

Mike was angry that Jimi refused to tour and blamed much of this on his

Jeffery owed someone $20,000. "They sent a guy over to kill Mike. That got his attention."

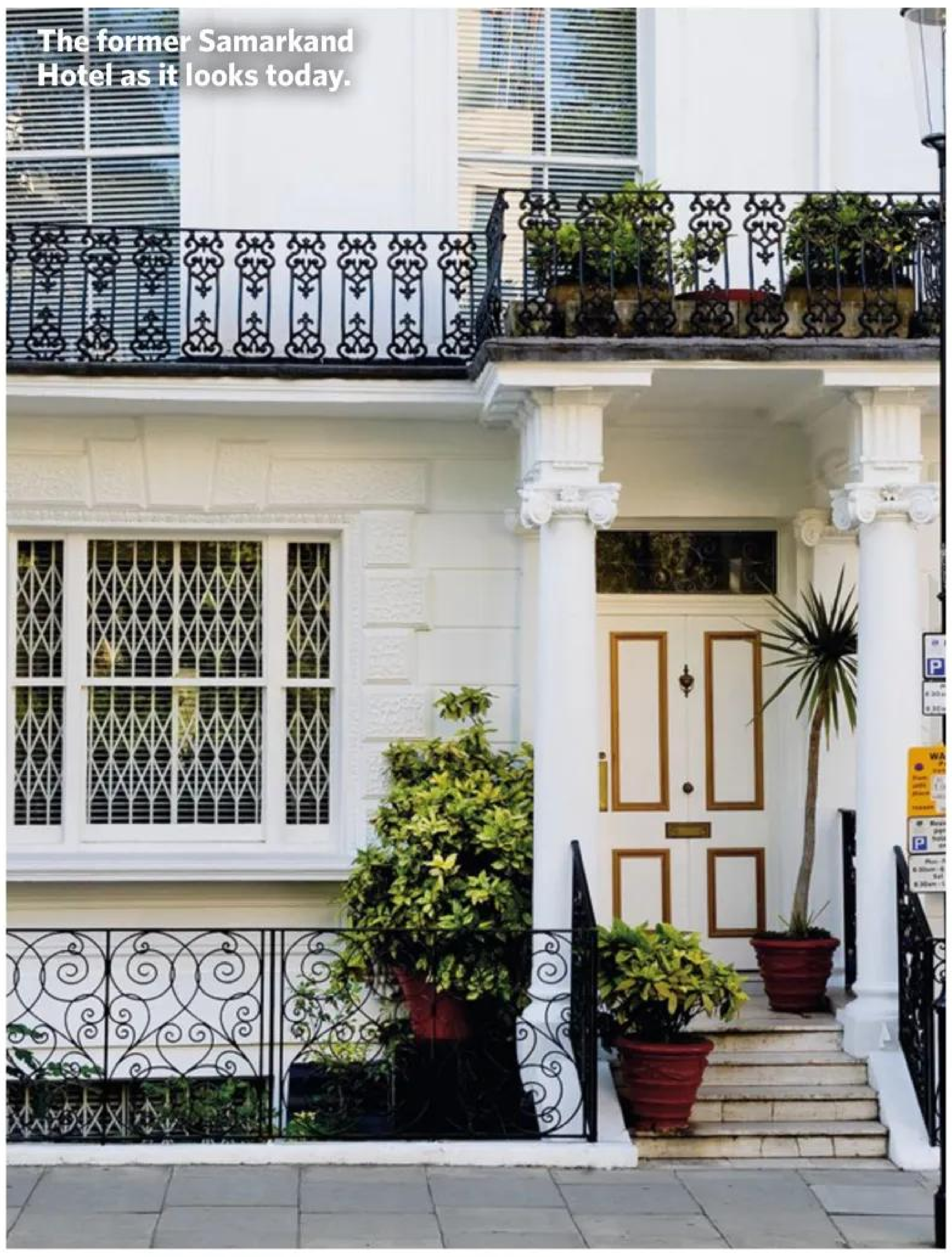
Studio manager Jim Marron

renewed relationship with drummer Buddy Miles. To compound the crime, Jimi was working at the Record Plant with a new producer, Alan Douglas. Jimi had met Douglas through Devon Wilson, a notorious New York groupie who had a strange and unhealthy relationship with Jimi. Douglas was essentially a jazz producer who also had interests in films and books and Jimi quite liked his bohemian, laid-back attitude. But the recording sessions were not very fruitful and Alan Douglas was no match for Mike Jeffery, so much so that Alan wrote to Jimi in December 1969 saying he didn't want to produce him any more. Still Jimi pressed on with plans for a new band with Buddy and bassist Billy Cox. Without Mike's permission, the Band Of Gypsys played two dates at Fillmore East over New Year 1970, before Mike intervened, not only firing Buddy, but insisting that Jimi reform the Experience. Noel Redding was put on standby, but eventually The Cry Of Love tour kicked off with Billy Cox on bass and Mitch Mitchell.

The US tour was a good money-spinner, but still Mike had mounting debt. A critical element in the story is whether or not Mike had taken out an insurance policy on Jimi's life. When Warner Brothers concluded a whole new set of agreements with Jimi in 1968, they took out an insurance policy, something which had become standard practice since the death of Otis Redding in 1967. Mike also prepared a similar policy and the document was in with a whole pile of concert contracts waiting for signature while they were in Hawaii filming *Rainbow Bridge*. Bob Levine spotted it and says he warned Jimi not to sign it; Tappy says he did.

Although from Mike's point of view, Jimi was back on track, their relationship was souring by the day. Jimi was incensed that by forcing him to fire Buddy, he was now interfering in the creative side, something he had never done before. Mike now had one eye on the calendar – his contract with Jimi expired on 1st December 1970 and he became increasingly convinced that Jimi would jump ship. With Electric Lady Studio at least partially open, Jimi had been working there for about a month. The very last thing he wanted to do was more touring, but he signed contracts to tour Europe in the autumn of 1970. A lacklustre performance at the Isle of Wight Festival was followed by a disastrous show in Arhus, Denmark, which was stopped after only a couple of songs. Jimi was still reeling from the effects of a handful of unidentified pills he had taken earlier just to block the misery of his situation. Worse was to follow in Germany on the Isle of Fehmarn where the atrocious weather and warring Hell's Angels encapsulated the sorry mess of Jimi's faltering career [see *CR*109].

So Mike knew the clock was running out on his contract with Jimi. He had a mountain of debt which included two creditors you didn't mess with – the Mafia and the IRS. But while it is true that Mike's management contract with Jimi expired at the end of 1970, Mike still had quite an investment in Jim's career. He had a half-share in the studio, various considerations as a result of the new deal struck by Warners with Jimi in 1968 and because of that little exclusion clause from '67, had rights over two films, *Jimi Plays Berkeley* and *Rainbow Bridge*. And while Jimi might have made a lot of noise about finding a new manager, who could that have been? The only name ever mooted was Alan Douglas and Jimi knew full well that Alan was not even close to being as effective as Mike. So it needed to be a major player who was also prepared to



The former Samarkand Hotel as it looks today.

take on Mike Jeffery with all that might entail. That said, if Mike had lost Jimi, he would have lost the share of the concert revenue, which as we have seen, was the most immediate and lucrative cash cow. And given the level of Mike's paranoia over money and Jimi, it was enough that he believed it. He might have calculated that Jimi Hendrix was worth more to him dead than alive – but did he engineer it?

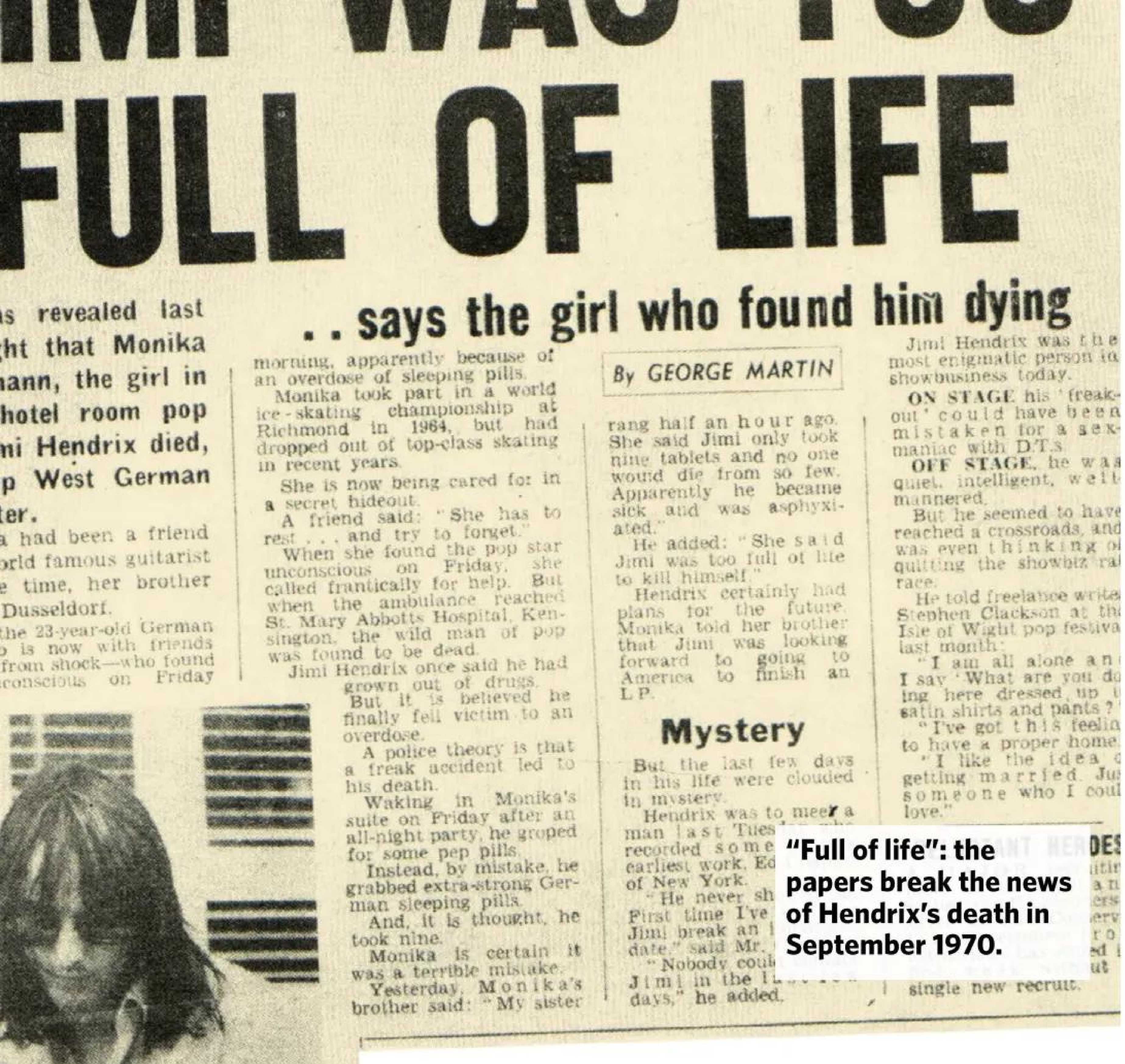
The key to the last few hours of Jimi's life lies with the testimony of Monika Dannemann. Born into a wealthy German family, Monika was a talented artist whose career as a skater was cut short by injury. She first met Jimi very briefly in Germany in early '69 and not again until a few days before his death – although she claimed that Jimi kept in touch, writing her letters she refused to let anybody see.

I interviewed Monika in 1989, for my biography *Electric Gypsy*, travelling down to Seaford on the south coast of England. Her house was situated in a quiet, respectable street. She opened the door and there she stood looking exactly as she did the day Jimi died: striking blonde hair, heavily made up, wearing a crushed velvet dress and a jangle of jewellery. The sense that time had stood still for Monika was underlined when I went inside. The walls were covered in her artwork – every painting featured Jimi Hendrix. The house was a shrine. She was very friendly and, in her quiet way, told me the same story she told the coroner at Jimi's inquest and subsequently all the other journalists and writers who over the past 20 years had tried to uncover what happened.

The essence of her story was this. Jimi was booked into the Cumberland Hotel near Marble Arch, but was actually saying with Monika in the basement flat of the Samarkand Hotel about 10 minutes drive away. During the afternoon of 17th September, they went with some people they'd just met to a flat near Baker Street. They returned to the Samarkand around 8.30pm and stayed there until the early hours of the morning when Jimi asked to be driven to another flat not far from the Cumberland Hotel in order to tell the perennially jealous Devon Wilson, who had flown in with Alan Douglas and his wife, that he was now engaged to be married. Monika dropped Jimi off, came back about 30 minutes later and they returned to the Samarkand about 3am. They talked, Monika made Jimi a sandwich. They got into bed about 6am, Monika took a sleeping pill and fell asleep about a hour later. Jimi was still awake and she didn't see him take any pills. She said she woke at 10am, saw Jimi was asleep and she went out to get some cigarettes. When she came back about 15 minutes later, she noticed Jimi had been sick and she couldn't wake him up.

Not knowing who Jimi's doctor was, she made some phone calls to Jimi's friends, eventually reaching Eric Burdon who told her to call an ambulance. That was 11.18am. It arrived nine minutes later. She said that the ambulance drivers were very relaxed, no blue lights, and she travelled with Jimi in the ambulance to St Mary Abbott's Hospital. Monika waited around and was eventually told by a nurse that Jimi was dead. The main thrust of her story was to blame the medical staff for his death, in particular the ambulance drivers, who she said had Jimi upright all the time.

I knew what Monika would say and so I had little cause to question any



IMI WAS TOO FULL OF LIFE

.. says the girl who found him dying

By GEORGE MARTIN

s revealed last ht that Monika ann, the girl in hotel room pop ni Hendrix died, p West German ter.

a had been a friend orld famous guitarist e time, her brother Dusseldorf.

the 23-year-old German o is now with friends from shock—who found conscious on Friday morning, apparently because of an overdose of sleeping pills.

Monika took part in a world ice-skating championship at Richmond in 1964, but had dropped out of top-class skating in recent years.

She is now being cared for in a secret hideout.

A friend said: "She has to rest . . . and try to forget."

When she found the pop star unconscious on Friday, she called frantically for help. But when the ambulance reached St. Mary Abbotts Hospital, Kensington, the wild man of pop was found to be dead.

Jimi Hendrix once said he had grown out of drugs.

But it is believed he finally fell victim to an overdose.

A police theory is that a freak accident led to his death.

Waking in Monika's suite on Friday after an all-night party, he groped for some pep pills.

Instead, by mistake, he grabbed extra-strong German sleeping pills.

And, it is thought, he took nine.

Monika is certain it was a terrible mistake.

Yesterday, Monika's brother said: "My sister rang half an hour ago. She said Jimi only took nine tablets and no one would die from so few. Apparently he became sick and was asphyxiated."

He added: "She said Jimi was too full of life to kill himself."

Hendrix certainly had plans for the future. Monika told her brother that Jimi was looking forward to going to America to finish an L.P.

Mystery

But the last few days in his life were clouded in mystery.

Hendrix was to meet a man last Tues... recorded some ... earliest work, Ed... of New York.

"He never sh... First time I've ... Jimi break an ... date," said Mr. ...

"Nobody coul... Jimi in the l... days," he added.

Jimi Hendrix was the most enigmatic person in showbusiness today.

ON STAGE his 'freak-out' could have been mistaken for a sex-maniac with D.T.s.

OFF STAGE, he was quiet, intelligent, well-mannered.

But he seemed to have reached a crossroads, and was even thinking of quitting the showbiz rat race.

He told freelance write... Stephen Clackson at th... Isle of Wight pop festiva... last month:

"I am all alone an... I say 'What are you do... ing here dressed up i... satin shirts and pants?'

"I've got this feelin... to have a proper home.

"I like the idea o... getting married. Ju... someone who I coul... love."

... single new recruit.

"Full of life": the papers break the news of Hendrix's death in September 1970.

of it – until I went down to the hospital. I checked the hospital admissions register for that day, 18th August 1970, but could find no record of Jimi's admission. I questioned Walter Price, a hospital porter who had been on duty that day. "Jimi was never admitted," he told me. "He was taken straight to the morgue."

What he said was not entirely accurate, but doubt now crept in about Monika's story. Checking back on her past statements, the bare bones of her story remained, but her actions and the timings altered with each telling. The discovery of those inconsistencies began a chain of events that ended not only in a much clearer picture of what happened, but a demolition of Monika's story. She vainly fought back with threats of legal action against anybody – including me – who doubted her word.

As Tappy makes clear in his book, and confirmed by everybody in Jimi's orbit – he regularly fell in love with 'the woman of his dreams', showering her with intimate whisperings and promises of undying love. Maybe sometimes he believed it himself, but mostly Jimi was charming his way to sex. It fell to Monika to be the last woman Jimi would ever woo and she convinced herself that he was sincere about marrying her and setting up home in England.

By common consent, the only woman who Jimi genuinely cared about – and who cared about him without any ulterior motive – was Kathy Etchingham. ("I wish they'd stayed together," says Tappy. "Jimi might still be alive today.") Jimi and Kathy lived together with Chas and his wife when Jimi first arrived well before he was famous – and later shared a flat together in Mayfair. And it was Kathy in the early 90s, aided by Mitch Mitchell's wife Dee, who took on the task of uncovering the circumstances of Jimi's death.

Incredibly neither the ambulance drivers, nor the police who attended the 999 call nor the doctors who did actually went through the motions of trying to revive Jimi in the hospital, were ever called to give evidence. For reasons best known to himself, the Coroner Gavin Thurston, just wanted this done and dusted as quickly as possible. The cause of death was cited as inhalation of vomit caused by barbiturate intoxication and with no evidence of foul play or suicide – Thurston declared an open verdict.

Kathy and Dee tracked down all these people and others besides. They gathered so much new evidence that the Attorney General ordered a police investigation. As it happened, a number of those who were happy to speak privately to Kathy either wanted nothing to do with the police or changed their stories for fear of publicity. So the inquest was not re-opened, but their testimonies stand. And so the story now looks like this.

Monika and Jimi did go the flat of some complete strangers in the afternoon, but Jimi stayed far longer than Monika wanted to, enjoying the attentions of the young women who were there and when they eventually left around 10.40pm, the owner of the flat Phillip Harvey said that Monika went crazy and was screaming and shouting at Jimi all the way out in the street. Later she did take Jimi to a party, but he was there much longer than 30 minutes, probably a good few hours. It was a flat belonging to a businessman with links to Track Records, Peter Cameron. Others present included Devon Wilson, Alan Douglas and his wife Stella. Monika came back to collect Jimi – he told Stella to get rid of her. But Monika kicked up such a stink that he had to leave.

When Eric Burdon asked Monika why she hadn't called an ambulance, she said that she was scared because there were drugs in the room. So first on the scene was Eric's roadie Terry Slater who told Kathy that he and Monika cleared out the flat, going across the road to some adjacent gardens where they buried the drugs. Meanwhile the ambulance drivers arrived to find Jimi dead and alone in the room. Following procedure they tried to resuscitate him in the ambulance, but he was clearly gone and this would explain why they were so relaxed and didn't rush through the streets. Terry said that he and Monica viewed all this from across the street. The doctors at the hospital also tried resuscitation, but they could see it was hopeless. Jimi had been dead for hours.

Every time Monika told the story, critical details changed; the time they went to sleep, when she got up, whether or not she went out for cigarettes and so on. It transpired Jimi had swallowed nine of Monika's German sleeping tablets, the equivalent of 18 times the recommended dose. And this is what killed him. Maybe she blamed herself for leaving them lying around. Maybe she felt guilty if Jimi had taken all those pills so he could escape from her constant nagging.

Or as she told Terry Slater, maybe she was just scared. Here was a 22 year-old white girl, a stranger in a strange land, from a wealthy background with a very conservative father, caught in a bedroom full of drugs with a world famous black musician. Could it be that on discovering Jimi dead she panicked and fled the hotel, and that all her strange behaviour and inconsistent stories were the product of covering-up this moment of weakness?

The problem was made worse for Monika over the years because she told everybody about not calling the ambulance immediately. So it became the wisdom among fans and other musicians that Jimi died because she delayed.

And where was Mike Jeffery while all this was going on? He was definitely in London on Sunday 13th September to visit Danny Halpern at Track Records. By all accounts he was desperate to find Jimi to discuss an upcoming court case concerning claims that Jimi had signed a deal with PPX Records before he signed with Chas and Mike. Did Mike stay in London? No, said both his assistant Trixie Sullivan and Jim Marron who both maintained Mike was in Majorca when the news came through. However Bob Levine tells a different story. Interviewed by writer John McDermott he said that it took a week after Jimi's death for Mike to call the New York office pretending that he had only just found out; "but I knew he was lying because I had spoken to people who saw him at a party Track Records had staged in London the night before Hendrix died". And who were these people? According to Bob the very same people that had been at the flat of Peter Cameron – the man with links to Track Records – where Jimi had been seen that same evening: Devon Wilson and Alan and Stella Douglas. Could this be one and the same party – with Mike arriving and leaving early – and Jimi turning up much later?

As deep as Kathy and Dee were able to dig, there are still two significant and unexplained aspects to Jimi's death. The first is that he was found fully clothed on top of the bed. Every version of Monika's story has them going to bed together which by any normal interpretation means getting undressed and pulling back the covers.

The second point is that both the ambulance drivers and the doctor who attended Jimi at the hospital say that Jimi was in a real mess. Dr John Bannister was the surgical registrar on duty that day. When Dr Bannister read my book he wrote to me from Australia: "The very striking memory of this event," he wrote, "was the considerable amount of alcohol in his larynx and pharynx… I recall vividly the large amounts of red wine that oozed from his stomach and his lungs."

Yet the toxicology report revealed an alcohol blood level equivalent to about four pints of beer – and in any case, Jimi had an unusually low tolerance to alcohol. Once when he'd had a bit too much, he totally trashed a hotel bedroom. Earlier that month in Sweden, Jimi had swallowed pills, but there was no alcohol involved. However inconsistent her testimony, nothing Monika said suggested that Jimi had drunk a lot of wine, nor had he done so earlier in the evening. And there was no mention of empty wine bottles in the room. So where did it come from?

The open verdict came as a great relief to both Warner Brothers and Mike. If the verdict in any way suggested suicide, foul play or that Jimi had somehow

GETTY X2

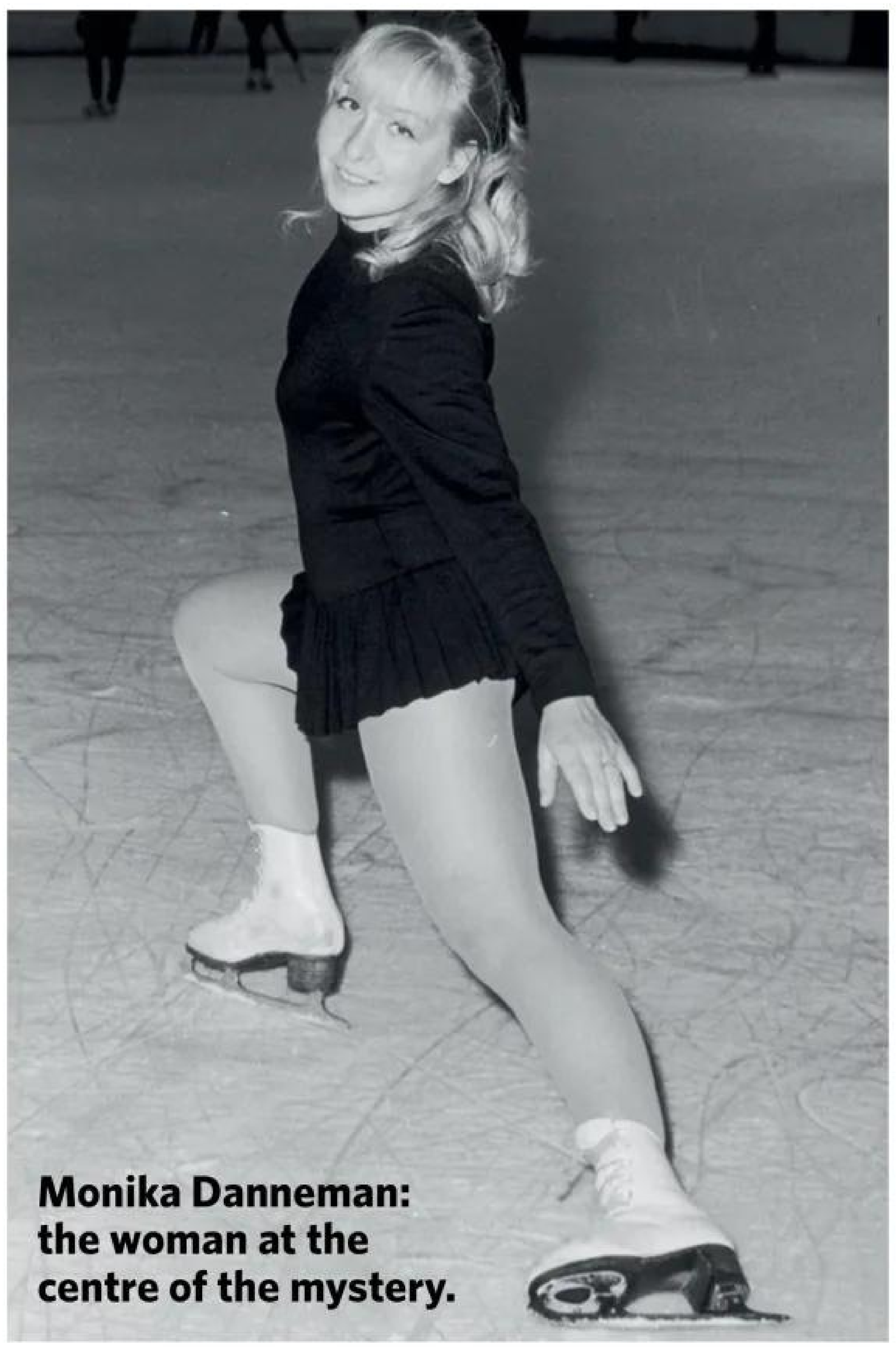
Mystery: Jimi's lungs and stomach were full of red wine but there was little alcohol in his blood.

"I recall vividly the large amounts of red wine that oozed from his stomach and lungs."

Dr. John Bannister

Kind of blue: jazz icon Miles Davis attends Hendrix's funeral in Seattle.

GETTY X2



Monika Danneman: the woman at the centre of the mystery.

contributed to his own death by reckless behaviour, then the insurance companies would have refused to pay out. In fact while the new police investigation was under way, the BBC tracked down the original insurance investigator who looked into Jimi's death who confirmed that he had been looking for ways not to pay, but refused to reveal the contents of his files. On the strength of a poem written by Jimi before he died, a very stoned Eric Burdon went on British television to declare that Jimi had committed suicide which brought a stern warning from Warner Brothers to shut up or else.

And if Mike was convinced he'd lose Jimi, as Noel Redding pointed out later, his death was very convenient for Mike's health and well-being. Tappy says he was able to clear all his debts and moreover, offer Jimi's father Al, the sole beneficiary of Jimi's estate, nearly $250,000 for Jimi's half-share in Electric Lady studios.

There was a curious epilogue involving Monika and Mike. In the immediate aftermath of Jimi's death, there were plenty of rumours flying around that Mike had been involved. In her book of artwork published in 1995, Monika wrote that even so, when she was in New York at the end of February 1971, she went to see Mike at Electric Lady studio – the man who everybody told her would do anything to buy silence. All they seemed to speak about was the possibility that Mike could become her manager to promote her artwork. She says that she specifically asked Mike to come to her to hotel room to 'discuss things privately.' Monika wrote that she resisted Mike's offers and flew off to Seattle. But why did she seek him out in the first place?

Jimi's premature death aged 27 was followed in the years to come, by the deaths of other key figures who died before their time. Always battling against heroin addiction, Devon Wilson fell to her death in mysterious circumstances from the Chelsea Hotel in February 1971 while Mike Jeffery died aged 39 in 1973. For Noel and Mitch, it was always a case of 'what do you after playing in the Jimi Hendrix Experience?' The answer was 'not much' and although Mitch fared better than Noel, both drank heavily as they slipped rapidly into obscurity. Noel died aged 57 in May 2003, Mitch followed in 2009 aged 61. Chas Chandler was also only 57 when he succumbed to a heart attack in July 1996, the same fate which later struck down Hendrix historian Tony Brown, also in his fifties, who more fully documented the events leading up to Jimi's death.

And what of Monika? As her story was crumbling in the face of new evidence, she made one accusation too many and Kathy Etchingham obtained a court order banning her from telling any more lies to reporters about Kathy and her investigation. Monika breached the order and had to face Kathy in open court. She was found guilty of contempt of court on Wednesday April 3, 1996. Always regarded as mentality quite frail – and liable for £30,000 in costs – two days later she committed suicide, her body found in a fume-filled Mercedes at her home in Seaford where I'd interviewed her seven years before. (There was no suicide note and predictably some – including her partner, guitarist Uli Jon Roth – speculated that she too was murdered.)

There may well be somebody out there who knows exactly what happened to Jimi Hendrix between 4am and 8am on Thursday 18th September 1970. And although the inquest was not re-opened, the case remains open. There is no statute of limitations on murder.

As Monika's story began to crumble in the face of new evidence, she committed suicide.

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Jimi Hendrix

Dolly Dagger

How London's famous clock tower and Jimi's main groupie inspired his last great song.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

Early one morning in August 1969, bassist Billy Cox was sitting on the patio of the house in upstate New York that he was sharing with Jimi Hendrix and drummer Mitch Mitchell. Looking out at the cows grazing in the nearby pasture, Cox thumbed a four-note pattern over and over through his amp.

"I'd put some new strings on, and I'm playing 'doodoo-dum-dum' – the chime of Big Ben," Cox tells *Classic Rock*. "Jimi's room was right above, and the window flew open. He said: 'Hold it! Keep playing that, don't stop!' He comes down in his undershorts and grabs his guitar, then he completes the riff. That was the formation of *Dolly Dagger*."

Hendrix, Cox, Mitchell and assorted friends were at the Shokan House to prepare for playing at the Woodstock Festival. "But really, Jimi rented that place to get his head together, and bringing Billy in was essential to the whole musical vibe," remembers Hendrix's engineer Eddie Kramer. "The change of musical direction was immediate, because of the roots they shared – the R&B, the funk. They grew up on those sounds, playing the chitlin circuit."

"We were hooked at the hip musically," Cox says with a laugh. "We'd been in the 101st Airborne together. Twenty minutes after we first met we were jamming. One reason that Jimi called me after all those years is that my mind was an archive of the riffs that we'd created in the past."

"They were writing a lot," says Kramer. "I remember dragging a four-track tape machine up there, and *Dolly Dagger* was one of the demos we worked on. Then we cut a version of it at the Record Plant, which was meh. We finally nailed it at Electric Lady. It's all part of the experience, no pun intended, of how Jimi would work through a song to get it right. And *Dolly Dagger* is a complex song."

With hindsight the song's complexity is fitting for the woman who inspired the lyrics. Devon Wilson was born in Milwaukee in 1943 and ran away from home as a teenager. "She was a mixed-race kid, on the streets all her life," Cox explains. Devon drifted to New York City, where she became part of the nightclub scene. That's where she met Hendrix.

"They had a really close relationship," says Kramer. "Devon was a presence. Very beautiful, very commanding, with quite an edge to her. But she was funny."

Devon kept Jimi happy by scoring drugs for him and procuring girls for threesomes. But as they grew closer, she expected to be his number one.

"Devon used to hang out on the sessions, and try not to say too much," says Kramer. "But she was used to a lot of attention. When Jimi was in the middle of recording, sometimes it would be very difficult to give her attention."

It was this dynamic that led to the episode at the centre of the song's lyric. On November 27, 1969, Jimi's twenty-seventh birthday, he and Devon went to see the Rolling Stones at Madison Square Garden. Since it was his birthday, Jimi half-expected to sit in with his friends. But Mick Jagger was wary of being upstaged, so it didn't happen. Afterwards Devon hosted a party for the Stones at a luxurious apartment she'd borrowed. All night she flirted shamelessly with Jagger in front of Hendrix. Mick's rivalry with Jimi extended beyond the stage. A few years earlier, Jimi had tried to pull Jagger's girlfriend Marianne Faithfull. At some point, Jagger nicked his finger. Rather than get a bandage, Devon licked off the blood. "That's where the line '*She drinks the blood from a jagged edge*' came from," recalls Kramer.

"The new direction suggested by *Dolly Dagger* added another question mark to Jimi's story."

After the song's basic rhythm track was cut at Electric Lady studios, Jimi layered on more guitars, backing vocals and foot stomps. *Dolly Dagger* was intended for the follow-up to *Band Of Gypsys*, but ended up being hijacked for a film soundtrack put together by Hendrix's manager Mike Jeffery. As explored in the new documentary *Music, Money And Madness: Hendrix In Maui*, the film, *Rainbow Bridge*, was a mishmash of underhanded deals and unscripted silliness. Its only redeeming features were the scenery and Jimi's killer performance.

"It was on the side of a dormant volcano called Haleakala, which means 'house of the sun'," Cox says. "As we walked to the stage, Jimi looked at me and said: 'Man, this is strange. Do you feel that vibration?' It had a lot of energy. But when we went on, it was magic. Jimi was in charge. I think I could've played with one hand because it was so spiritual."

Dolly Dagger was first released on October 9, 1971 on the posthumously released *Rainbow Bridge* album, then as a single on October 23.

Jimi didn't live to see the release of the film or the soundtrack (he died on September 18, 1970). The funkier new direction suggested by *Dolly Dagger* added another question mark to his story. "If he'd lived, I think he'd have his own empire," Kramer says. "He would've straightened his life out, found great new musical directions. His place in history would be even greater than it is now."

"Jimi was a cosmic messenger who saw music as a means to bring people together," Cox says. "He was global before the rest of the world was global. His music is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was in the twentieth. And it'll probably be relevant in the twenty-second and twenty-third centuries."

As for Dolly Dagger herself, Devon Wilson met an untimely end when she fell from an eighth-storey window of the Chelsea Hotel in 1971.

What did she think of the song that made her part of history? "In a perverse sort of way, she probably dug it," says Kramer. "It's not so much that it stroked her ego, as it revealed something about her. Even though it had some negative aspects, hey, imagine being in 1970 and having Jimi Hendrix write a song about you!"

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

Even when things are going well in the studio, making a great record can be a tightrope walk across artistic temperaments. As a bandleader, how did Jimi Hendrix maintain that balance?

"Jimi would take the piss out himself with self-deprecating humour," says Eddie Kramer. "If all of a sudden a track was going south, without even missing a beat he would launch into the *Batman* theme or *Peter Gunn* or any of the TV themes that were popular then. Everybody would laugh and relax, then we'd get right back into the song again."

DANIEL TEHENEY AUTHENTIC HENDRIX LLC

FRED W MCDARRAH/GETTY IMAGES

Jimi and bassist Billy Cox. "We were hooked at the hip musically," says Cox.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
October 23, 1971

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.74

PERSONNEL
Jimi Hendrix
Vocals, electric guitars, foot stomps
Billy Cox
Bass, fuzz bass, backing vocals
Mitch Mitchell
Drums
The Ghetto Fighters (Arthur and Albert Allen)
Backing vocals

WRITTEN BY
Jimi Hendrix

PRODUCED BY
Jimi Hendrix

ENGINEER
Eddie Kramer

LABEL
Reprise

The Afterlife

Jimi Hendrix has enjoyed an even more prolific career in death than he did in life. More than half a century after he died, the hit machine keeps rolling on – with no sign of slowing.

Words: **Jon Hotten**

Are you *really* experienced? Just some of the multitude of Hendrix albums now available – he only released *four* in his short life.

Jimi Hendrix made just four albums in life, but his death – and his afterlife – have been remarkably productive. He has released more albums than The Beatles, more than Led Zeppelin; he has comfortably outpaced Jim Morrison, Michael Jackson and Prince. Since 2010 alone, there have been three "new" studio albums, six live albums, and a five-disc anthology, plus a stream of live gigs available to stream via the Experience Hendrix website – and they‘re just the official releases. Today, a musician who passed away over 50 years ago remains an almost physical presence in ourr lives.

Though it could not have been conceived of at Hendrix's peak in the late 60s, death, however sorrowful, has since become just a staging post in the career of an artist. A pioneer in life, Elvis Presley quickly became an avatar for post-life potential, his earnings in death accelerating past his earthbound accomplishments within a decade or so of his passing in 1977. In 2009 alone, he pulled in $55m. Via video recreation, Presley has even been on tour, visiting countries he never travelled to in life. How long before we are able to similarly 'see' a Jimi Hendrix concert?

In the crudest terms, it's easy to market a dead artist, because their art has become still. They are not going to make that 'difficult' concept album, they will not demand a reinvention of themselves, they won't be moving into films, or judging talent shows or signing up for a residency in Vegas – they will not become subject to the diminishing of the muse that drove them. It's every manager's dream.

Perhaps most importantly, those who've died young, remain forever young. We know how Paul McCartney looks at 65, but not John Lennon. Jim Morrison did not continue to wear leather trousers into his forties, nor Kurt Cobain bleach his hair in his. Jeff Buckley will never be anything other than a beautiful, doomed youth.

And Hendrix? What would have befallen him? The novelty hits of Jeff Beck? The long, slow slide into mainstream mediocrity of Eric Clapton? A comeback slot at Live Aid? An acoustic reinvention produced by Rick Rubin? A grumpy old age *à la* Bob Dylan or Neil Young? Where would he have taken his music? What of his image? His future is imaginable, but unknowable. Instead he's forever the lean, cool, funky, sensitive, modest guy of memory, trapped in time, always available to successive generations; the embodiment of the moments in which rock music made its mark.

Hendrix, in his productivity over such a short period, didn't really dilute his potency, and his death meant that time would not do it for him. Thus those four brief years frame him as a genius, someone whose contribution was formative, a musician whose playing redefined what was possible.

But in considering Hendrix's music we should consider what genius is, and what it isn't, too. It is not absolute, it is not infallible; it is not definitive. It is not predictable. Prince made *Purple Rain* but he also made *Love Symbol*; Maradona's second most famous goal was scored with his hand; Dalí made a lobster telephone, and so on *ad infinitum*. It's not realistic to imagine that Hendrix would have sustained his glorious early blast for ever. Given the transience of the times in which he recorded, he can have had no idea of the scale of his impact. If he had, perhaps that would have changed him, contained him somehow. At some point he would have fallen out of fashion and had to deal with that too. We can only guess at what he would have thought of the music he'd recorded but not released, whether he would have sanctioned it or binned it, agreed with the packaging and the titles and the running order and all the rest of it. He was already exercising greater creative control over the records he made after *Are You Experienced*, and he was tasting the downside of the music business too, caught up in old contracts and money wrangles. There was also a hint of indecision over the direction he wanted to go. The nine 'new' albums, 17 live albums, and 28 compilation albums, box-sets, anthologies, soundtracks and whatevers (and those are conservative figures, as there are almost certainly more when you consider foreign releases and others of dubious provenance) that have been pulled together from the tapes he left behind have for the most part conformed to the blueprint of style and image Hendrix left behind. Such a free thinker would almost certainly have moved away from it more quickly than that. Nonetheless, it is what we have left of him, for better or worse.

Oh boy: the four-CD and DVD Hendrix anthology, *West Coast Seattle Boy*.

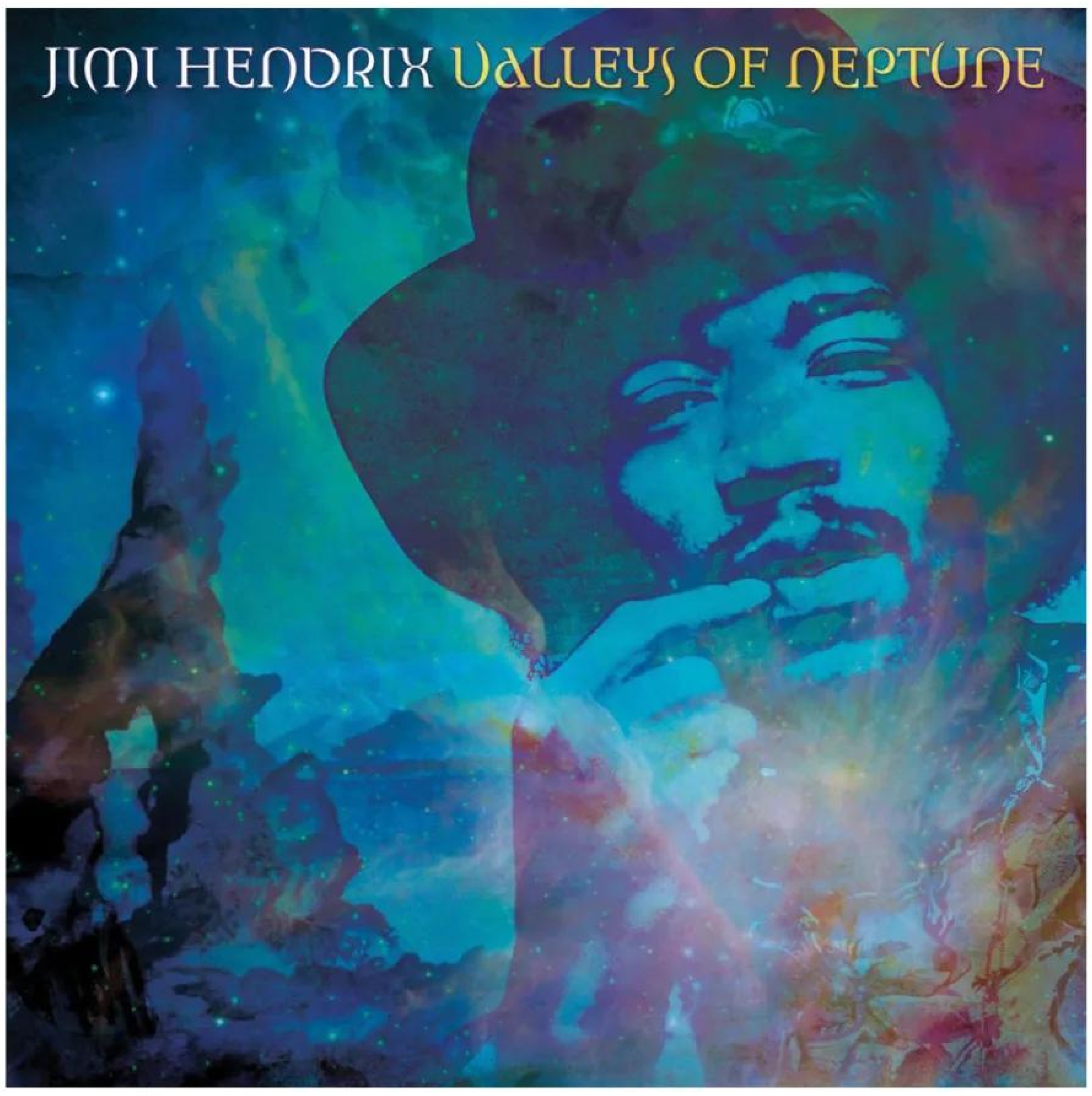
After the crash: the 70s

By the time the new decade was halfway done, the Hendrix canon had more than doubled. 1971, the year after his death, saw the arrival of both *The Cry Of Love* and *Rainbow Bridge* – both of which can fairly be said to have been based more than somewhat on what Hendrix would have done had he lived. However, 1972 saw the release of *War Heroes*; '74 *Loose Ends*; and 1975 both *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning*. The industry may have been young, but it was never innocent. Such was the weight of Hendrix's impact, so obvious the ongoing influence of his sound, his release schedule was almost as giddy as that of breakthrough bands of the era like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin.

The Cry Of Love was perhaps the most important of them, as well as the record that remained closest to its creator's vision for it. Hendrix had foreseen his next album as a double, which he intended to title either *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun* or *Strate Ahead*, according to lines found in his notebook, and he had completed large parts of the recording before he left for England to play the Isle Of Wight festival, a trip away from home from which he never returned.

Engineer Eddie Kramer and Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell polished and completed the work, and assembled the running order, and their involvement was key to the album's positive reception. If anyone could have guessed at Hendrix's plans it was perhaps those two, and *The Cry Of Love* sounded authentic - 10 Hendrix tunes that showcased his full range, from the pyrotechnical *Angel* and *Ezy Ryder* to a far gentler moment,

Night Bird Flying, while *My Friend* used bar-room bonhomie to disguise a darker sentiment: that Hendrix was already struggling to distinguish the friends from the hangers-on. Recordings dated from the 1968 *Electric Ladyland* sessions all the way along to 1970 and the album closer, *Belly Button Window*, which was apparently the last vocal Hendrix ever laid down. In all, *The Cry Of Love* wrapped up not just Hendrix's variety of styles and the breadth of his composition, but also ran almost the length of his recording career. Wrapped in a sleeve with a severe, impressionistic line-drawing by Nancy Reiner of Hendrix with his head bowed, it was an atmospheric,



DEAD ARTISTS DON'T MAKE CONCEPT ALBUMS, REINVENT THEMSELVES, MOVE INTO FILMS, JUDGE TALENT SHOWS OR DO A RESIDENCY IN VEGAS.

well-judged attempt at capturing the man in his final moments.

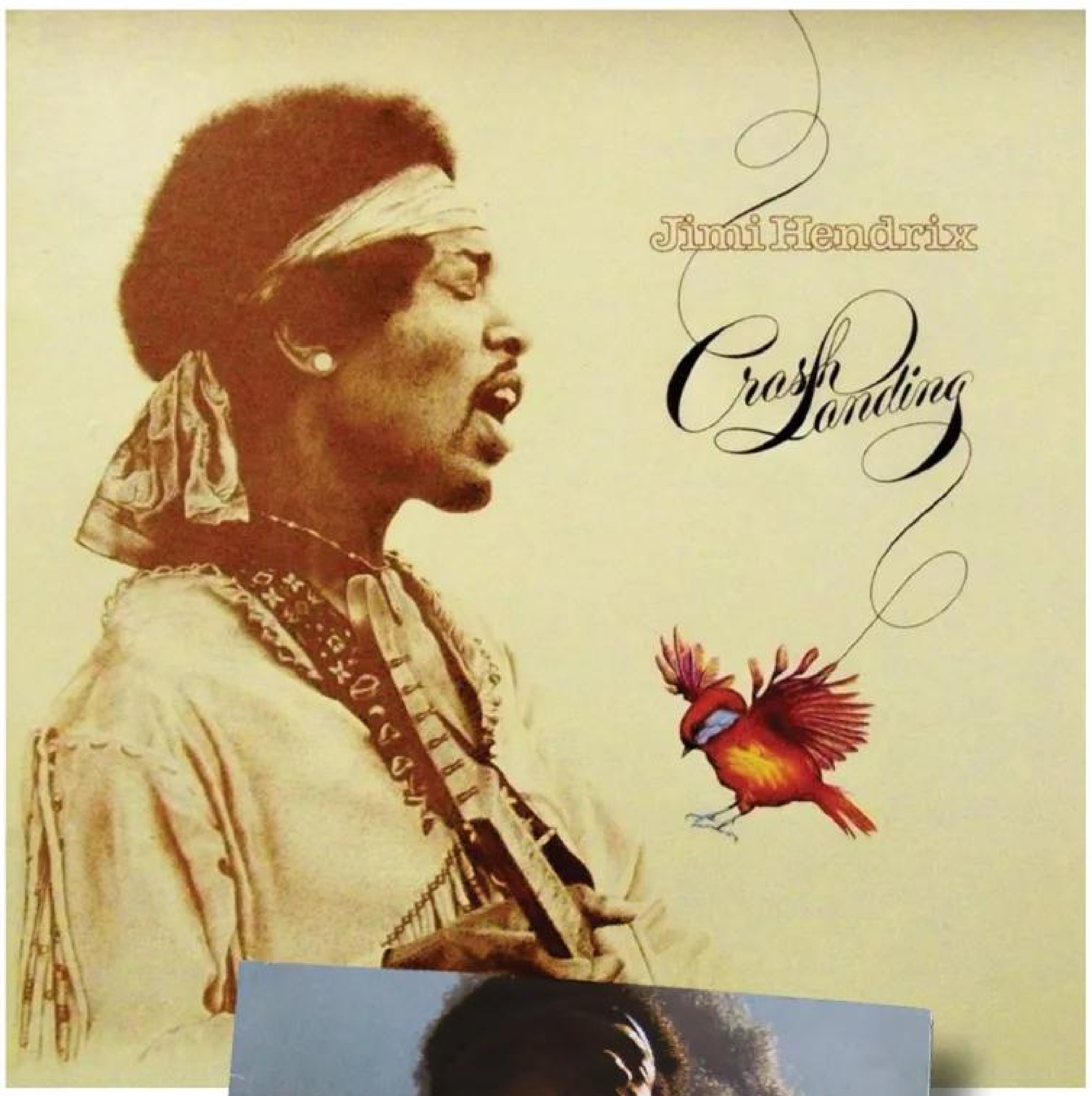
Rainbow Bridge, however, was *The Cry Of Love*'s less good-looking, less-successful twin. Released some six months later, again with the aid of Kramer and Mitchell, it hoovered-up more of the ideas Hendrix left for the double-album, and was used as a soundtrack for the Chuck Wein film of the same name – which, confusingly, did not feature music from the free concert around which the movie is built. Perhaps most interesting is the studio version of *Star Spangled Banner*, which Hendrix played so famously as a lament to Vietnam at Woodstock. Here it is more restrained, but still compelling.

The opener, *Dolly Dagger*, said to be about Hendrix's one-time girlfriend Devon Wilson, was a wiggy delight, and the record closes in fine style with a live, cosmic blues, *Hear My Train A-Comin'* from a show in Berkeley, California, that ran beyond 11 minutes and that folds brilliantly into *Hey Baby (New Rising Son)*.

War Heroes took the final three tunes intended for *First Rays* – *Stepping Stone*, *Izabella* and *Beginnings* – which became the highlights of an uneven record. Much of the rest is either padding – *Midnight* – or, like *Three Little Bears*, just a bit of silliness never really meant for release.

Rarely have Hendrix records been as honestly titled as *Loose Ends*. It's an odds and sods affair that reeks of desperation, and indeed, Warner Bros refused to release it in the US. Best-known is probably *The Stars That Play With Laughing Sam's Dice*, a song that appeared as the B-side to the 1967 single *Burning Of The Midnight Lamp*, and widely available elsewhere.

The final major releases of the 70s, *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning*, fare better, especially for the determined Hendrix-head. *Crash Landing*'s finer moments come from the Band Of Gypsys, the stunning *Message Of Love* and *With The Power*, plus an interesting re-working of *Stone Free*. Its companion release, *Midnight Lightning*, despite the rather muddy provenance of some of its songs, is ballsy and bluesy, boasting a studio version of *Rainbow Bridge*'s *Hear My Train A-Comin'* as well as a fully worked-out *Machine Gun*, bits of which Hendrix had sketched out onstage at Woodstock and then brought to fruition in the Band Of Gypsys. To all intents and purposes, however, the cupboard was now bare, as the next decade and a half would show.



Born again: 2010's *Valleys Of Neptune*, 75's *Crash Landing* and 71's *Rainbow Bridge*.

Re-experience: the 80s

The 1980s were not to be Hendrix's era. While contemporaries like Eric Clapton and Tina Turner settled down to comfortable and lucrative MOR records, there appeared little more that could be done with the remnants of Jimi's brief years in the studio. In 1980 came *Nine To The Universe*, featuring long jams from Hendrix's time in New York in the spring of 1969, when he recorded at the Record Plant and the Hit Factory with Billy Cox and Mitch Mitchell, and also Buddy Miles. The titles themselves are giveaways: *Jimi/Jimmy Jam* clocks in at nine minutes, *Young/Hendrix* at 10 and *Drone Blues* at over six, and while Hendrix plays fast and loose with his ideas, it's the kind of thing only guitarists and groupies can really get excited about.

A gap of eight years followed before *Radio One*, which caught Hendrix at the BBC in 1967. These are valuable recordings, further evidence of the importance of the BBC archive, to which almost every great name of the 1960s and 70s contributed. Here are alternate, tight takes on everything from *Stone Free*, *Foxy Lady* and *Purple Haze* to The Beatles' *Day Tripper* and Presley's *Hound Dog*.

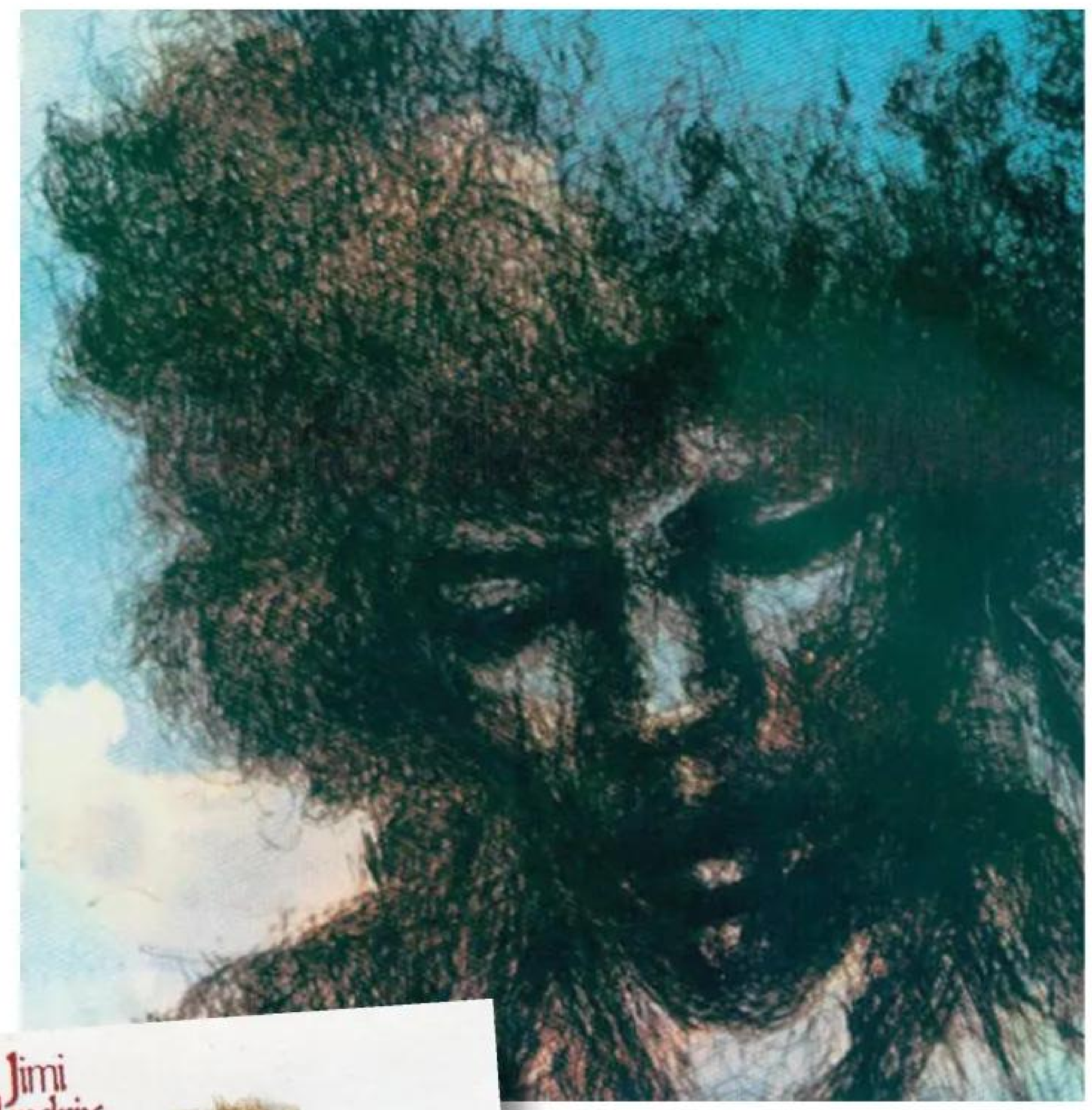
THE HENDRIX CATALOGUE FLOWERED AGAIN AS A NEW MARKET EMERGED. CDS AND NEW DIGITAL STUDIO TECHNOLOGY GAVE OLD RECORDINGS NEW LIFE.

Cosmic sounds: the 90s

The Hendrix catalogue was really to flower again as a new market emerged. The 80s had belonged to video, but the 90s would mark the rise of CDs, plus new digital studio technology that give old recordings new life. The Hendrix catalogue would be one of many beneficiaries, firstly and most importantly in 1997, with the issue of *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*, a stunning recreation of the album Hendrix was planning to make at the time of his death. Billed as a 'concept compilation', it took the recordings that had originally appeared as *The Cry Of Love*, *Rainbow Bridge* and *War Heroes*, and reassembled them as closely as possible to the blueprint that Hendrix had left behind. In addition, fragments of other ideas and jams were worked in to make up a collector's dream of a re-release, lavish in sound and rich in production values.

There's no point in pretending that Hendrix is not being second-guessed, but it is lovingly done. Here is Jimi in full, leaning towards R&B and funk as well as rock, psychedelia and blues. The old recordings glisten and shine, as if brought into the sun from an old cupboard, and while Hendrix may not have done things exactly this way, he would have been hard pushed to do it to a higher technical standard.

South Saturn Delta, which followed a few months later, is something of a companion piece, a collection of demos, alternate takes and mixes that reflect on tracks from many of the posthumous releases. With the Hendrix family now controlling the catalogue, there is a feeling that, along with making some money, they genuinely want to reflect on the mysteries of Hendrix's creative process. The takes here are not slapped together but rather are insightful visits to some of the classics, including *All Along The Watchtower*, *Angel* and a brilliantly uplifting instrumental fragment of *Little Wing*.



Extra experience: 1971's *The Cry Of Love*. Left: 1988's *Radio One*.

Hendrix in full: the 21st century

After the excellence of *First Rays* and *South Saturn Delta*, the Jimi Hendrix Catalog Project kicked off with 2010's *Valleys Of Neptune*, billed as '12 previously unreleased recordings', which again add to the sum of Hendrix knowledge without torching the legacy for commerce. A similar attention to detail infuses the four-CD anthology *West Coast Seattle Boy*, a lovingly-produced artefact worth any devotee's time and effort. Subsequent studio-based releases *People, Hell And Angels* (2013) and *Both Sides Of The Sky* (2018) unearthed yet more outtakes, including such rarities as *Somewhere* (featuring Stephen Stills on bass).

Live albums have arrived with more regularity than their studio counterparts. Highlights include the three-disc Winterland, capturing the Experience's three-night stand at the famed San Francisco venue in October 1968; Miami Pop Festival, a previously unreleased recording of his appearance at the eponymous event in May 1968; and, most recently, 2020's Live In Maui, which presents two sets recorded at the guitarist's penultimate US appearance, just a few weeks before he died.

Of all of rock's heavenly pantheon, Jimi Hendrix is now among the best cared for down here. Amen to that.

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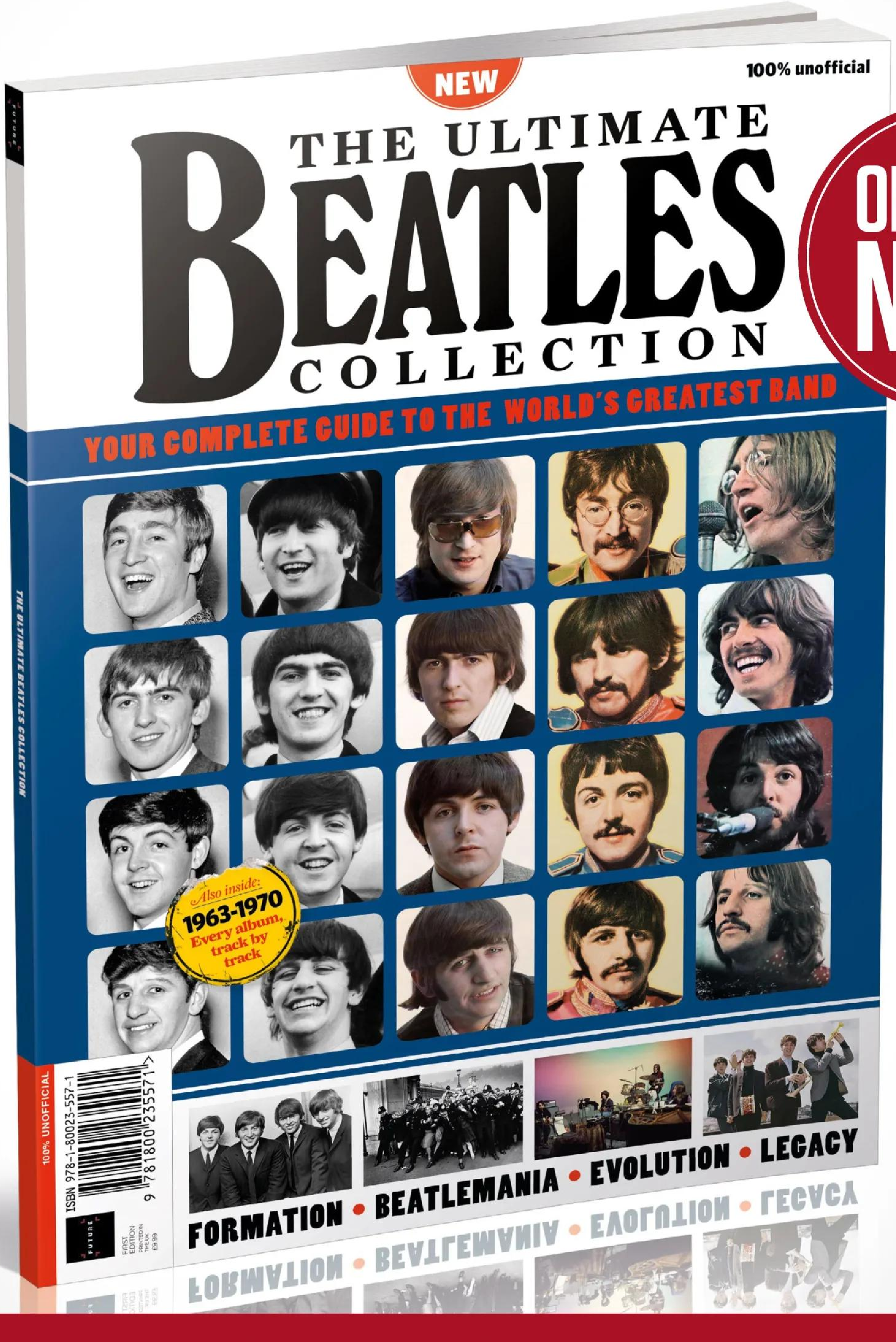

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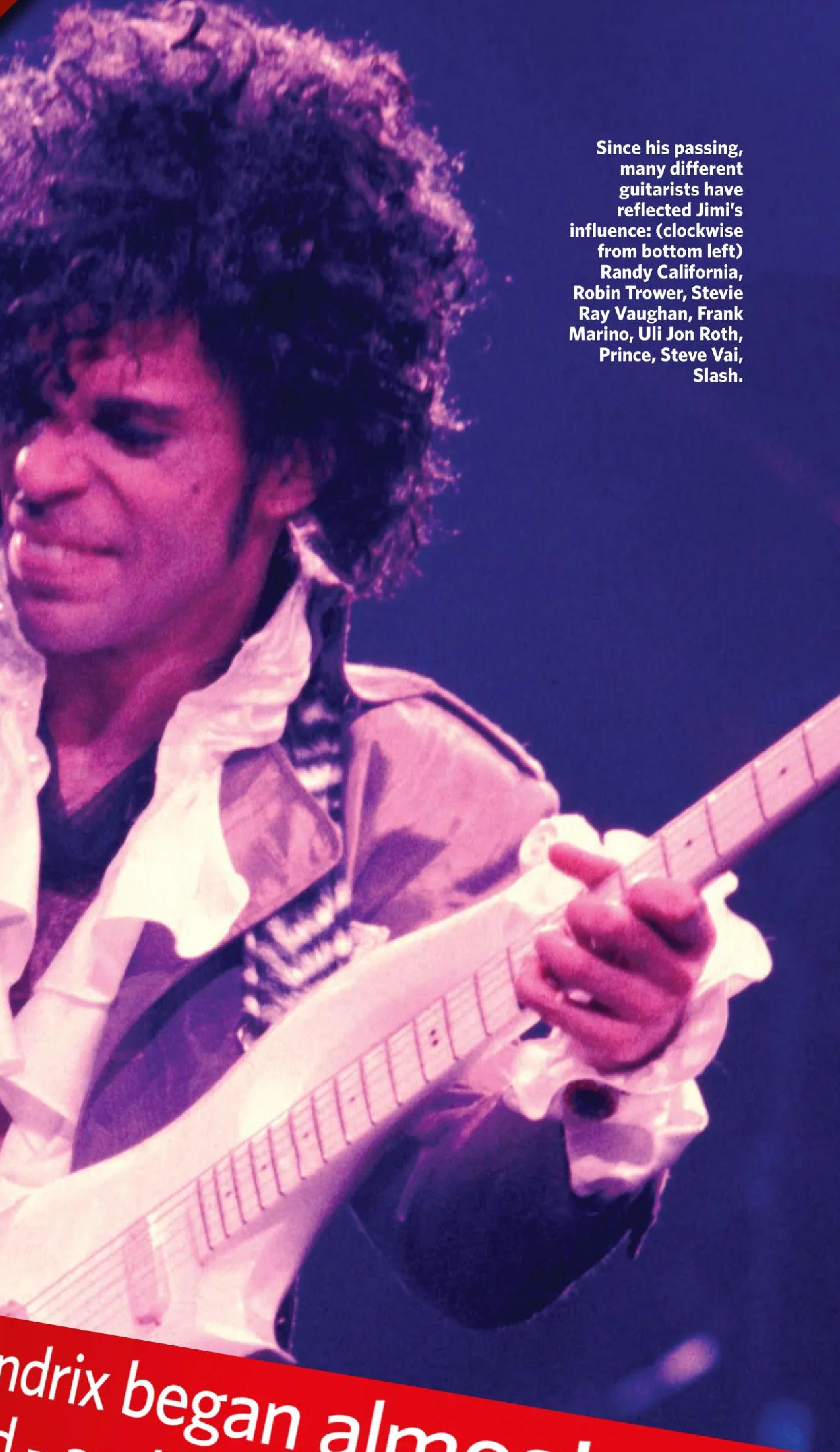
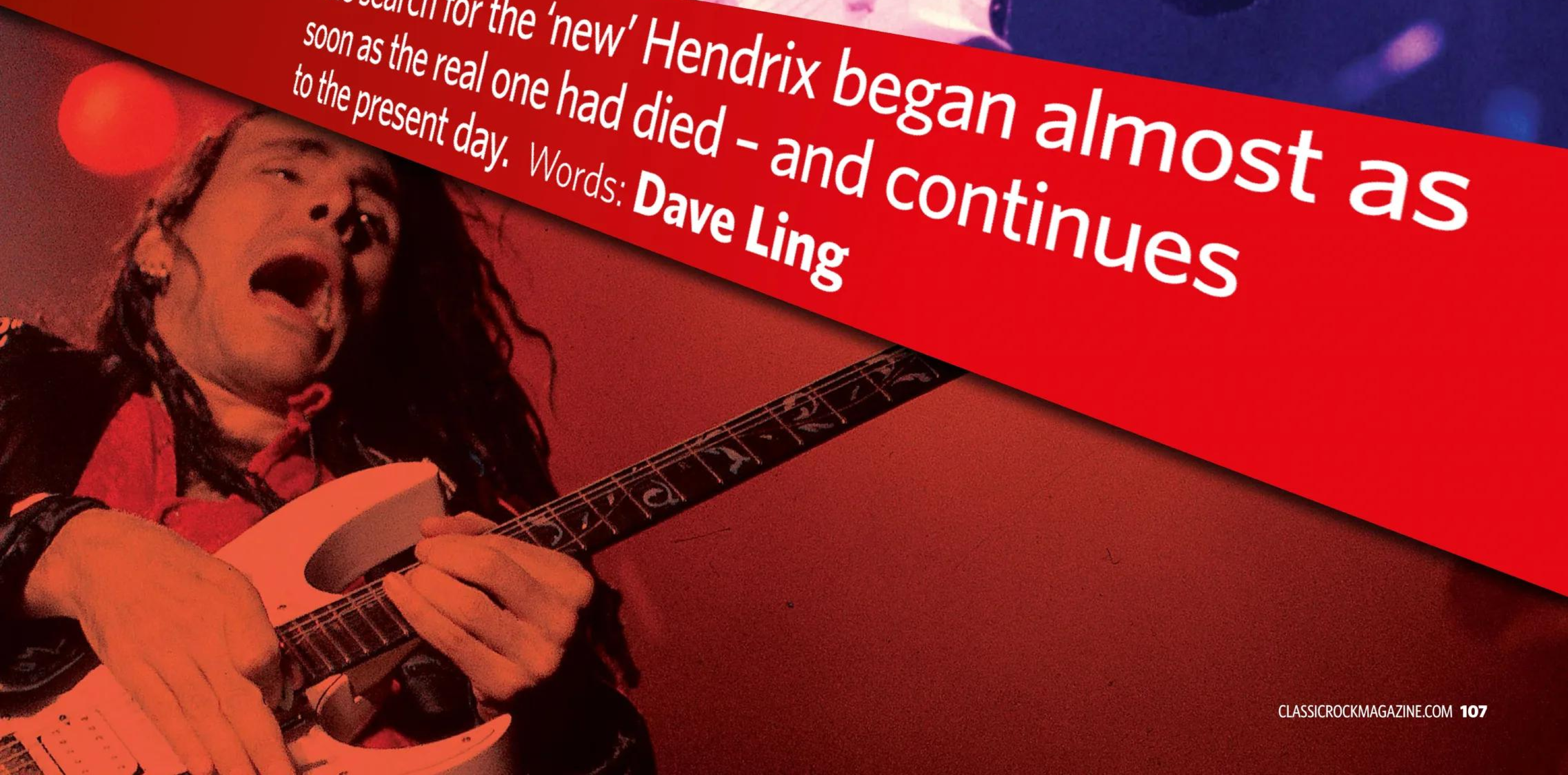
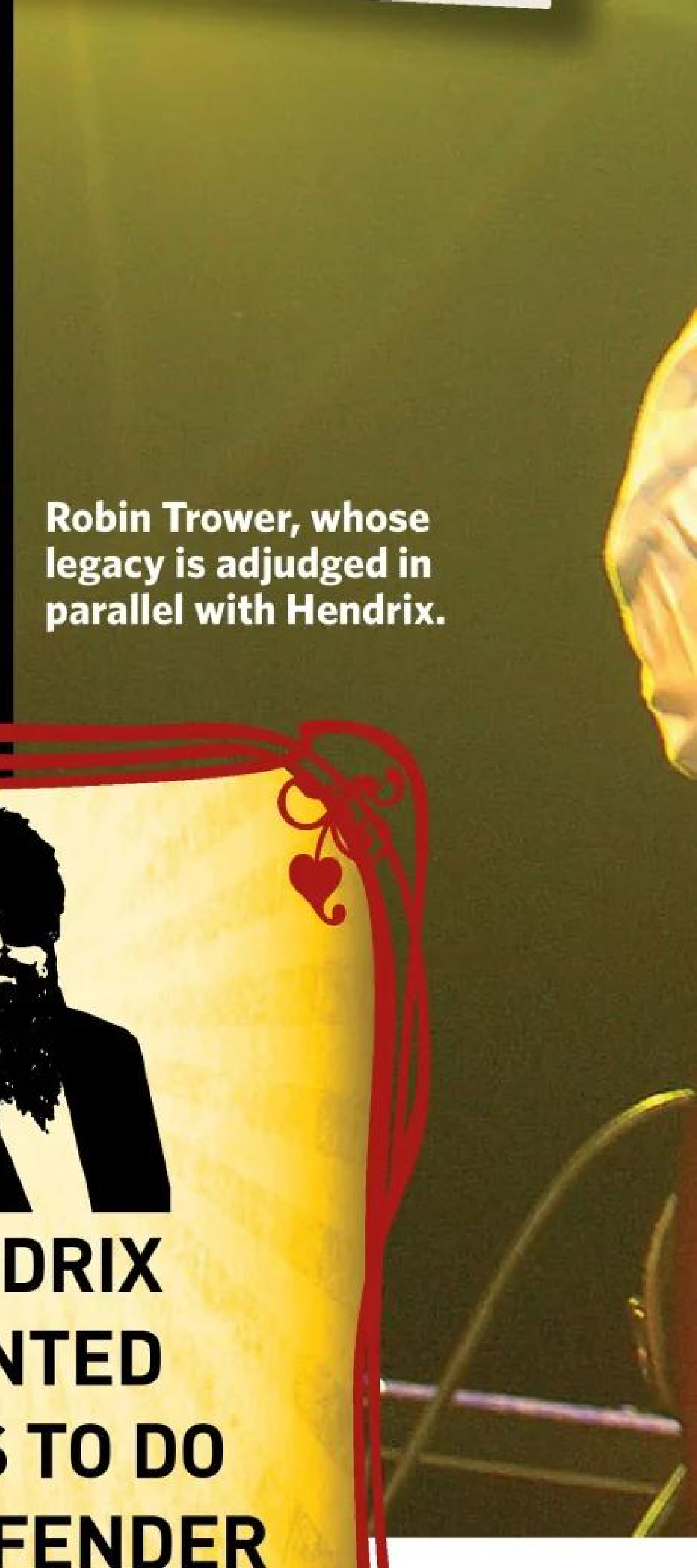


Since his passing, many different guitarists have reflected Jimi's influence: (clockwise from bottom left) Randy California, Robin Trower, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Frank Marino, Uli Jon Roth, Prince, Steve Vai, Slash.

The search for the 'new' Hendrix began almost as soon as the real one had died – and continues to the present day. Words: **Dave Ling**



Devout Hendrix fan Billy Gibbons today and (inset, second right) meeting Jimi while in pre-ZZ Top outfit The Moving Sidewalks.



Robin Trower, whose legacy is adjudged in parallel with Hendrix.

Since Jimi's tragic passing there has been no shortage of fellow guitar players willing to reflect his influence, or in other more extreme cases to plunder his act hook, line and sinker.

As an artist that emerged, just like Hendrix, at the tail end of the 1960s, there's no doubt that ZZ Top's **Billy F Gibbons** fits into the category of devout fan, as opposed to a cynical plagiarist. Obvious parallels can be drawn between the guitarists, both having played fuzz-toned licks in three-piece groups.

At 2010's *Classic Rock*-backed High Voltage Festival in London, Gibbons led his band through a version of the Hendrix-popularised *Hey Joe*, introducing it with the words: "When we first started out a guy came along and pumped us up, taught us about everything. We got to be good friends with him and I'm sure you love him like we do."

In fact, as a member of his pre-ZZ Top psychedelic outfit The Moving Sidewalks, Gibbons not only opened for Hendrix on the latter's first headline US tour in 1968, but was able to glean priceless insight into Jimi's technique and modus operandi. To put this into perspective, Hendrix would already have been 25 at the time and released many of his most popular songs.

"When we [the Sidewalks] toured with Jimi I was only 18 years old and it was a real mind-bender and eye-opener to say the least," Gibbons told *Classic Rock* many years later. "As most of us know, either consciously or unconsciously, Hendrix began inventing new things to do with a Fender Stratocaster, things that it had not necessarily been invented for. He did it very well, too."

At one of the tour's overnight stops, Gibbons found himself in the hotel room across the landing from Jimi. "That was convenient for enabling me to ask him the obvious question: 'How do you *do* that?!'" reminisced Billy, who was invited into a room filled by a hi-fi console "the size of a small Buick". The Jeff Beck Group's *Truth* was among the records being blasted out. "Hendrix was totally mad about [that album]; totally OTT about Jeff's playing," continued Gibbons, adding: "Oddly enough, Hendrix was all too willing and ready to include blues licks, which had fallen out of favour in the States with most black entertainers, in his arsenal of offerings."

Following in Jimi's wake, several guitar players would come to prominence during the 1970s, including two who emerged from their own well-known groups to pursue solo careers, tapping into the sound and vibe that Hendrix had pioneered.

Born Randy Craig Wolfe, **Randy California**'s stage moniker was bestowed upon him by Jimi in order to distinguish him from another guy called Randy who was also a member of Hendrix's group The Blue Flames (the other Randy, the bassist, was rechristened Randy Texas). Playing five sets an evening for six nights of every week this association lasted for three gruelling yet educational months. When Jimi accepted Chas Chandler's invitation to go to England in 1966, the 15-year-old California was considered too young by his parents to accompany him in pursuit of stardom, forming the group Spirit the following year.

Still a teenaged prodigy at the time, California went on to enjoy several hits with Spirit (including *I Got A Line On You* in 1968), and it has even been suggested that Jimmy Page was influenced by Randy's contribution to the song *Taurus* when writing *Stairway To Heaven*, something that

"HENDRIX INVENTED THINGS TO DO WITH A FENDER STRATOCASTER THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARILY INVENTED FOR."

Billy F. Gibbons

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Trower in 1974, fronting his own Experience-like power trio.

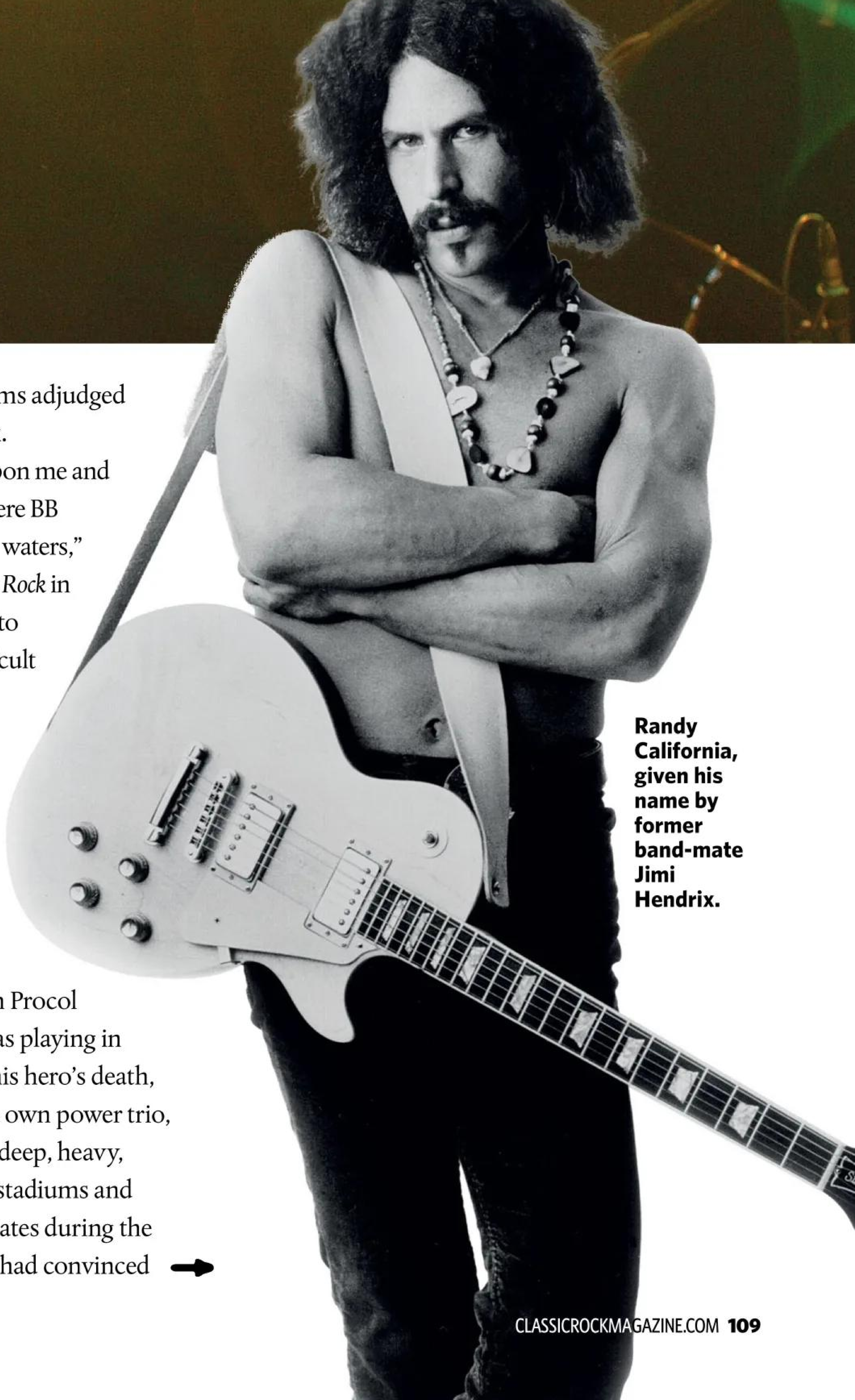
Zeppelin's legendary guitarist has since, unsurprisingly, strenuously denied. Dismayed by Hendrix's death, California left Spirit and then reclaimed rights to the name, using it to release a string of albums until his own death. Randy perished in unfortunate circumstances in January 1997, sucked out to sea while saving the life of his drowning 12-year-old son.

Looking back upon their relationship in 1994, California stated: "Jimi was a very spiritually attuned person. He was always searching for the truth – the reality of life. The answers to some of his questions appeared in some of his songs via his imagination, his hopes and his dreams for humanity. He had so much compassion for what was going on. I was at a very young age when I worked with him, but I could tell he was a very loving, caring and open person."

Although raised on the other side of the Atlantic (born in Catford, South London, his family later moving to Southend-on-Sea in Essex) **Robin Trower** is another veteran guitarist whose considerable legacy always seems adjudged in parallel with that of Hendrix.

"Jimi was a huge influence upon me and remains so to this day, but so were BB King, Howlin' Wolf and Muddy waters," Trower acknowledged to *Classic Rock* in 1999. "I've had to resign myself to those comparisons, but it's difficult because I've always admitted to the Hendrix influence. But to attribute everything I've done to Jimi is failing to give me the full credit for what I've created [for all these years]. There should be a happy balance."

Having first found fame with Procol Harum, with whom Trower was playing in San Francisco on the night of his hero's death, Robin became the leader of his own power trio, guiding them through a sea of deep, heavy, shimmering blues to headline stadiums and attain superstar status in the States during the early 1970s. Hendrix's passing had convinced →



Randy California, given his name by former band-mate Jimi Hendrix.

Trower that he had to become a solo artist. Procol Harum were moved enough to pen a tribute to Jimi on their *Broken Barricades* album, but for Robin that wasn't anywhere near enough.

"*Song For A Dreamer* seemed to open the floodgates," he explains. "I started writing more and more for the guitar, and there wasn't room for that in [the more keyboard-slanted] Procol."

Playing a Stratocaster and enhanced by the stellar, soulful vocals of former Stone The Crows bassist James Dewar, Robin's atmospheric, effects-laden technique is best encapsulated by his second solo release, 1974's *Bridge Of Sighs*, which contained not only its breathtakingly moody title cut, but also staple tracks *Too Rolling Stoned*, *Day Of The Eagle* and *Little Bit Of Sympathy*. In the current millennium, still recording and touring a variety of different projects including a collaborative group with Jack Bruce, Trower remains pragmatic. "If you're going to get compared to someone, who better than Jimi Hendrix?" he shrugs. "It can become boring, but ultimately it's a compliment."

Should Robin Trower have cause to complain, one can only imagine how **Frank Marino** must feel. The Canadian guitarist's entire career was forever skewed by something that he is alleged to have said in an interview. Marino was quoted as saying he had been visited by an apparition of Jimi Hendrix following a bad LSD trip. The tale spread like wildfire, as one would expect. Indeed to this day, it's the sole thing that some music fans actually know of Marino.

"Although personally they only hurt my feelings, professionally those stories destroyed any credibility my band [Mahogany Rush] might have had to become accepted in the mainstream," Frank told *Classic Rock* in 2000. For the record, he continues to deny them in the most vehement terms. "They were absolutely ridiculous," he fumed. "It's like having a career on the pages of the *National Enquirer*. For God's sake, I never said I was Hendrix reborn. One snide writer came up with this story that I had been inhabited by Jimi's spirit whilst in a coma and [because of that] I suddenly became a great guitar player. That whole visitation stuff goes against my religious belief as I've been an orthodox Christian for over 20 years, although I don't proselytise that," he continued. "I stopped doing any drugs or drink before I started playing music professionally."

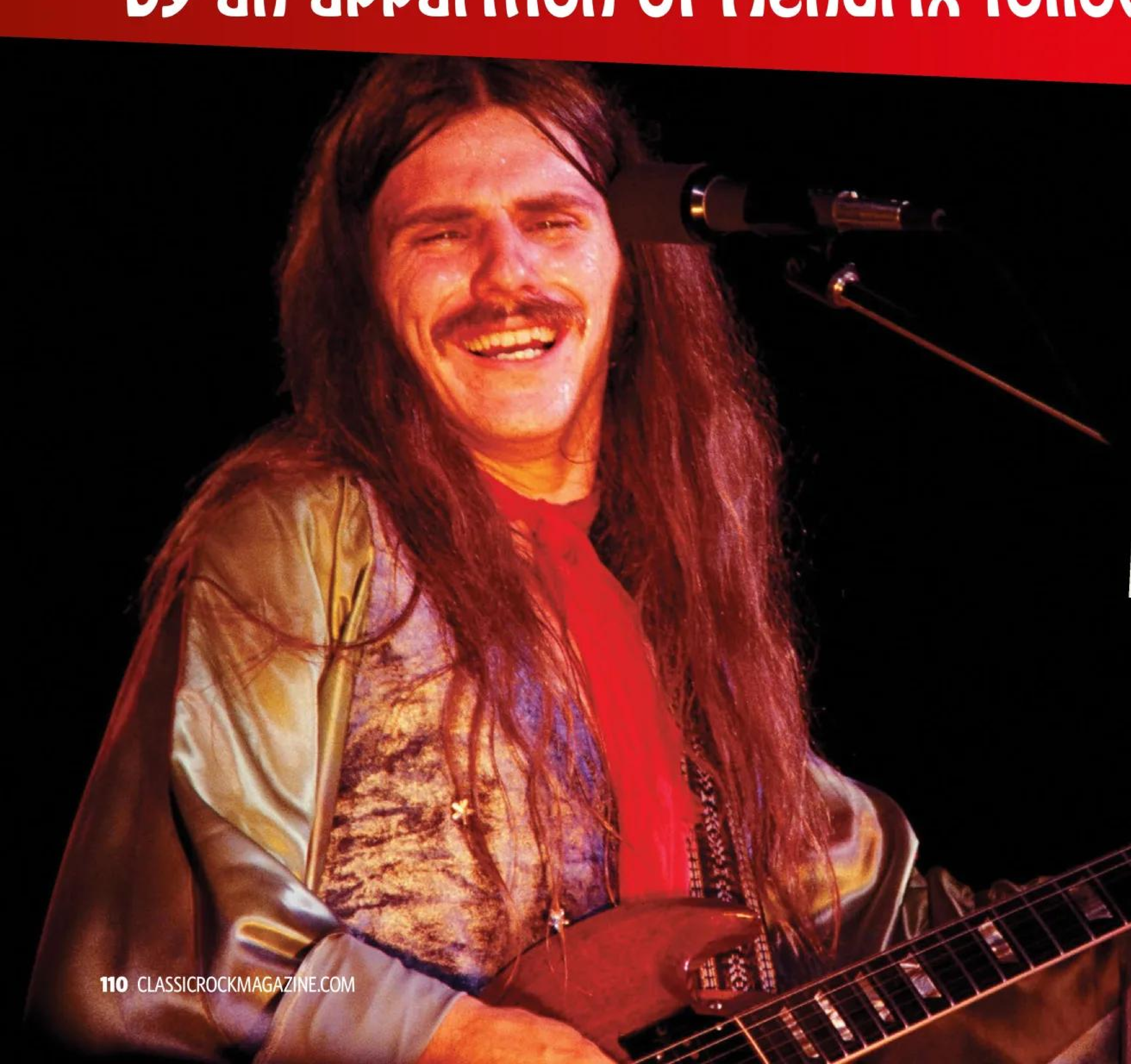
It's worth noting that Mahogany Rush's 1978 concert album *Live* – an exceptional guitar-driven record in its own right – ends with Marino and Mahogany Rush returning to the stage for an encore and announcing: "For all you who dug us before, a long time, ago, and for those of you who want to dig it now… Jimi Hendrix," before launching into a superb version of *Purple Haze*. Among other random examples of his fandom, a year later Mahogany Rush also covered *All Along The Watchtower* on their *World Anthem* album.

Perhaps Marino, labelled a Jimi clone from the very outset, was merely resorting to some sort of damage limitation in order to carve himself a niche? "Let's put this into context, I was the first guy to do it," Frank later claimed. "I was a 16-year-old Canadian kid doing that in an American market, and admitting it. I was too honest. I was advised to write three-minute hit tunes but I never wanted to be a star. I only wanted to play what I wanted and to discover whether people liked it. I found out that the people did, but the elite [of the music and entertainment worlds] didn't. I can't fault them for that – even the ones that wrote those lies about me."

Proving that he had retained his sense of humour, when the same interviewer asked who, if anyone, had ripped off Frank Marino the most, quick as a flash he replied: "I'd have to say Jimi Hendrix… just kidding!"

Best known for his work with the Scorpions and his own band Electric Sun, **Uli Jon Roth** is another guitarist widely perceived to have blurred the line between inspiration and imitation. Such was the Düsseldorf native's obsession with Hendrix that

Frank Marino was quoted as saying he'd been visited by an apparition of Hendrix following a bad LSD trip.



Frank Marino (left) believes Mahogany Rush's career was scuppered by a journalist's fib about Frank's 'Hendrix experience'. Eddie Van Halen (right) said "I'm nothing like Jimi."

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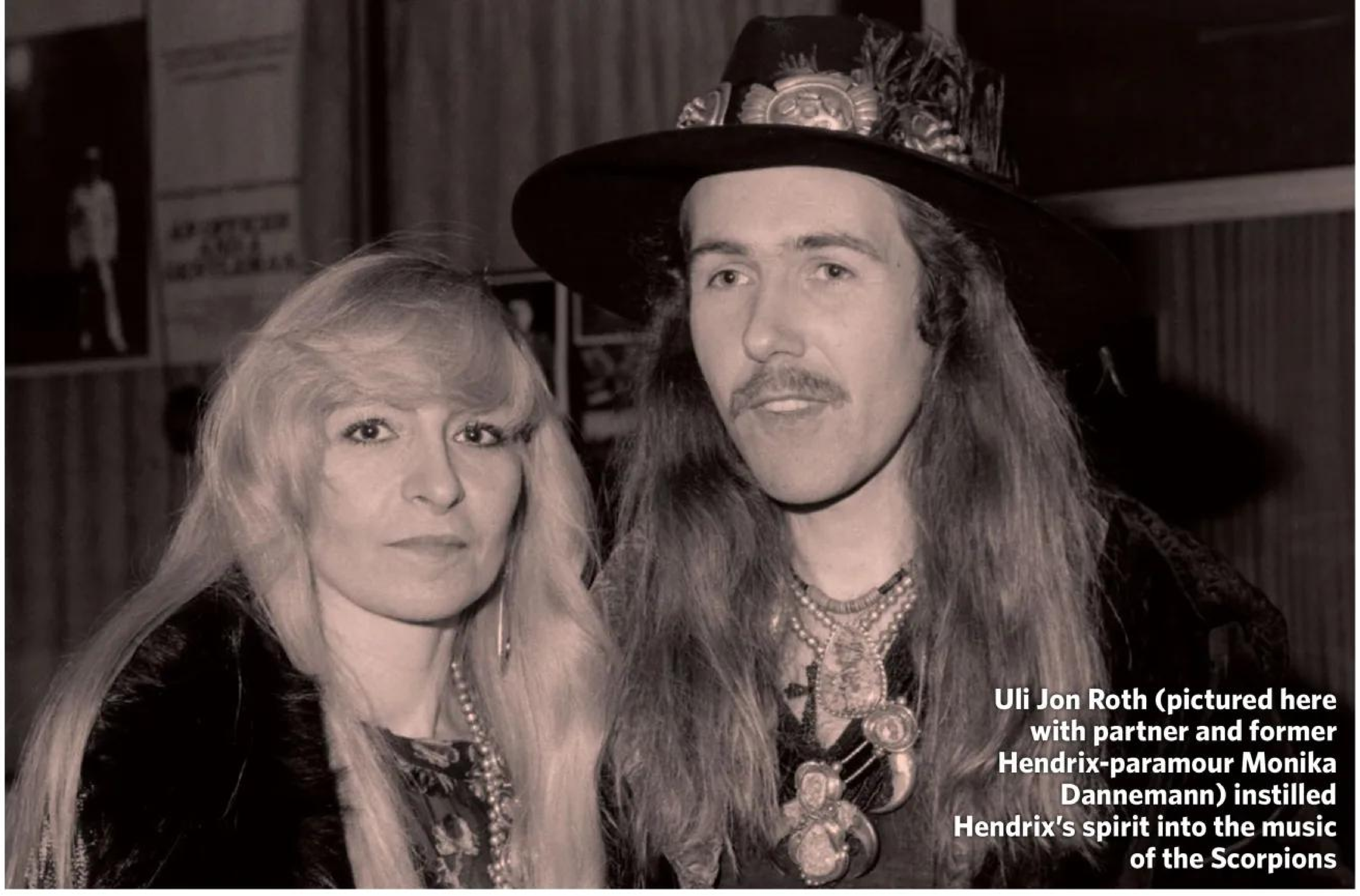
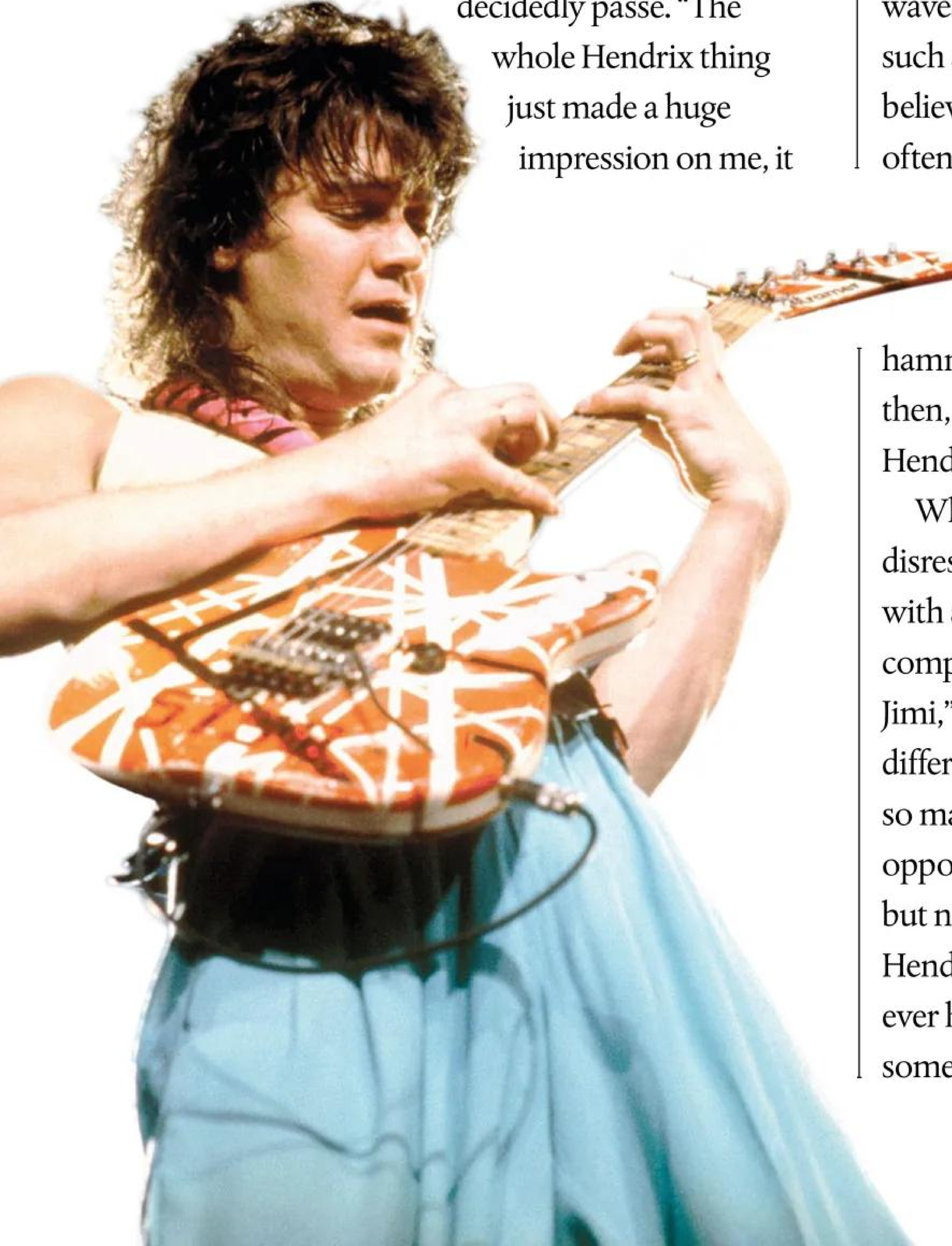


Uli Jon Roth (pictured here with partner and former Hendrix-paramour Monika Dannemann) instilled Hendrix's spirit into the music of the Scorpions

he became romantically involved with Monika Dannemann, the now-deceased artist still famous for being Jimi's last girlfriend. As well as painting the sleeves for three Electric Sun albums, Dannemann receives a writing credit on several of Roth's most noteworthy songs, including the Scorpions' *We'll Burn The Sky*. Years after her death, Roth still credits Dannemann as the person that challenged him "to get to know my inner self".

Roth got to see Hendrix onstage on multiple occasions and even managed to wangle his way backstage at Jimi's final German concert, though the association with Dannemann was the closest they got to meeting. He compensated by bringing a fabulously flamboyant style of playing to the Scorpions from 1973 to 1978, signing off from the German band with the glorious double live album *The Tokyo Tapes*. He was even still dressing like Hendrix in his summer of love pomp in the mid-80s, at a time when beads and flares were decidedly passé. "The whole Hendrix thing just made a huge impression on me, it changed my musical outlook on things completely," said Uli, who dedicated Electric Sun's 1979 debut, *Earthquake*, to Jimi's spirit. "I've learned so much from that man's approach and his way of making music."



In the latter half of the 70s, one man was to take everything he'd absorbed from Hendrix – which, as he freely admitted, was plenty – to turn the art of guitar playing on its head via a senses-jarring combination of super-fast technique and a truly bamboozling repertoire of tricks. In his adopted stomping ground of Los Angeles, **Edward Van Halen** was part of a family that came originally from Nijmegen, Holland, relocating to Southern California in 1962 where their father played in wedding bands. Tutored as a classical pianist, Edward's first guitar of note was nicknamed Frankenstein, having been pieced together from other instruments to meet his requirements.

As a self-named band featuring Edward and his drumming brother Alex began to create tidal waves of interest in Sunset Strip fleapits such as Gazarris in the mid 70s, few could believe their eyes or ears. Edward would often perform his groundbreaking instrumental song *Eruption* with back turned to the audience, in order to conceal its fusion of hammer-ons and finger-taps. No surprise, then, that EVH was soon labelled 'the Jimi Hendrix of his generation'.

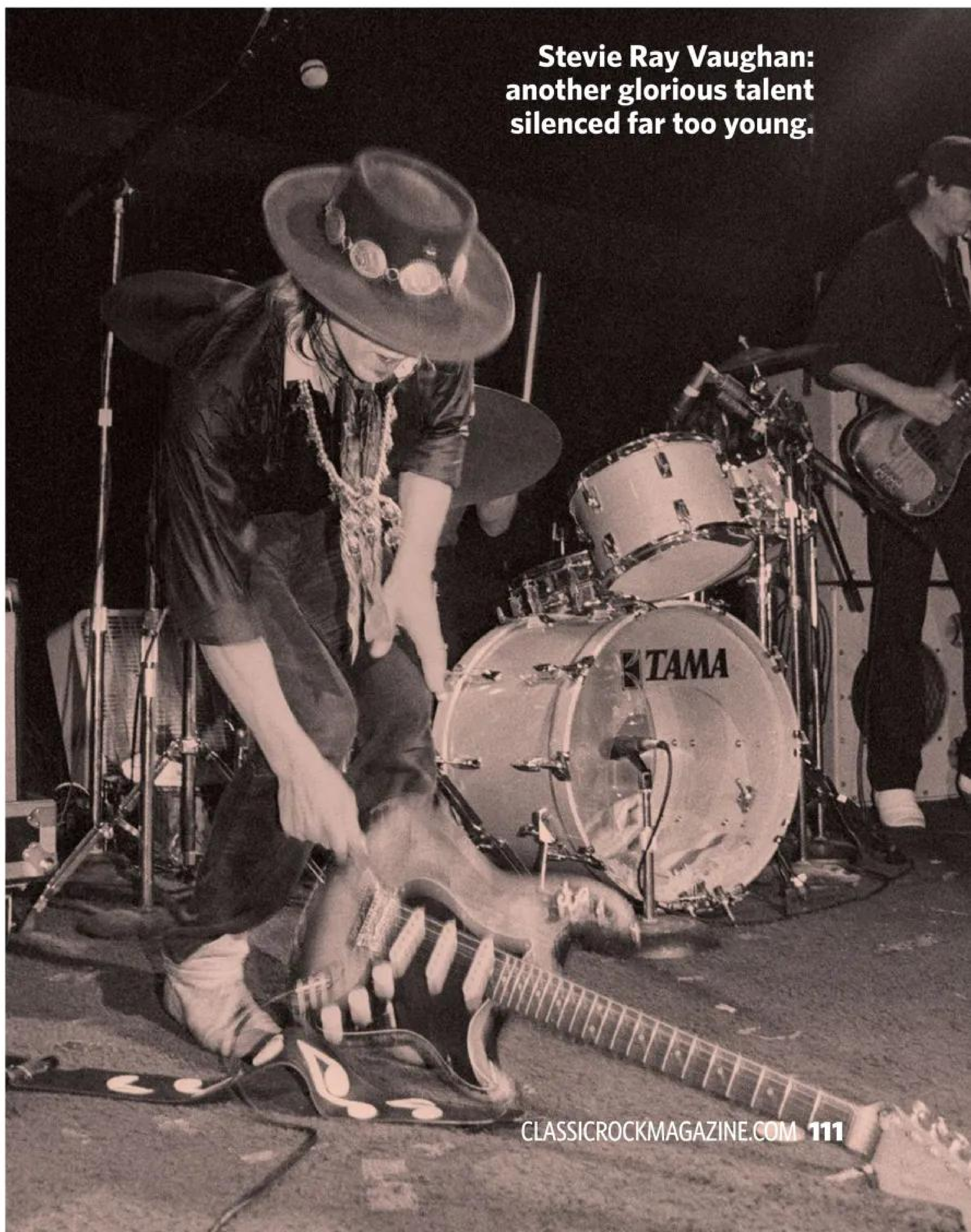
While defusing any suggestion of disrespect, Edward took such an accolade with a pinch of salt. "It's a hell of a compliment, but I'm really nothing like Jimi," he once commented. "I'm very different because I create stuff. He used so many effects that I was the complete opposite. I wanted the guitar to do things, but nobody built the guitar that I wanted. Hendrix was an amazing player, but if you ever heard any of his live bootlegs, even some of the Woodstock stuff, it's hard for him to keep that thing in tune."

Despite his apparent modesty, there's little doubt that Edward Van Halen re-imagined the guitar's possibilities almost as much as Hendrix before him .

By complete contrast, though he shared some of Van Halen's ability as an unmissable showman, **Stevie Ray Vaughan** was a self-confessed purist. Another disciple of the Stratocaster, the Texan had no desire to reinvent the wheel, offering instead a heartfelt missing link between rock musicians like Hendrix, Beck and Eric Clapton and their blues-pioneering ancestors Buddy Guy, Albert Collins, BB King, Muddy Waters, Otis Rush and Albert King. His style often incorporated simultaneous lead and rhythm parts, just like Jimi.

It says plenty that, besides a stint alongside David Bowie, Vaughan is best known now for a version of *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*, a song he re-recorded with his group Double Trouble on 1984's *Couldn't Stand The Weather* album. Over the course of several releases and onstage, SRV also covered *Little Wing* and *Third Stone From The Sun*. Unlike certain others discussed here, however, Stevie Ray never let the Hendrix comparisons get him down. "There's only [ever been] one Jimi Hendrix and I'll never be him," he once told a TV interviewer. "I'll just do the best I can to carry on his music, like I would anybody's music that I've ever appreciated. I love Jimi just like a brother."

Having worked hard to overcome drug and →



Stevie Ray Vaughan: another glorious talent silenced far too young.

alcohol problems, and with his star firmly in the ascension, Vaughan tragically died in a helicopter crash in August 1990. He was a mere 35 years old. SRV was a talented guitar player that deserved attention, without craving the limelight, and that's how he will be remembered in the fondest of terms.

Randy Hansen: a top-notch Jimi impersonator "officially recognised by the Hendrix family".

A musician who falls squarely into the category of Hendrix impersonator is **Randy Hansen**. Like Jimi, Hansen was born in Seattle. There were also strong physical similarities, enhanced by the fact that Hansen emulated many of Jimi's tricks, including playing the guitar with his teeth and behind his back. Randy earned himself a contract with Capitol Records, and his self-titled debut is well worth seeking out. The critics saw through him, however, and these days, having been in a band with Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell, he earns a living as one of the most proficient Jimi impersonators on the circuit. His guitar playing can also be heard on the soundtrack to Francis Ford Coppola's nightmarish 1979 Vietnam movie *Apocalypse Now* and should a claim at his website bear scrutiny, Hansen's current endeavours are "officially recognised by the Hendrix family".

Also during the 80s, another guitarist would suffer accusations of sporting some of the Emperor's New Clothes, though unlike Hansen, Prince Rogers Nelson – the Artist Better Known As **Prince** – has easily succeeded in establishing himself as a significant and consistently original musical force.

Influenced by Little Richard, James Brown, Sly & The Family Stone and, of course, Hendrix, Prince first emerged as a blip on the radar of the average rock fan during the summer of 1984. Crowned by a sultry power-ballad title track that climaxed with a guitar solo to die for, his sixth album, *Purple Rain*, was a sexy, irresistible collection of songs (it was also the soundtrack to a highly popular, semi-autobiographical movie that starred its creator in the role of The Kid). Despite the fact that Prince's background was in funk and dance music, he was cautiously embraced by the rock community.

In a controversial move, in 1984 *Kerrang!* magazine put him on the cover, basing a whopping eight pages on a set of photographs shot at a concert in Detroit by snapper Robert Ellis, a live review that screamed: "Hendrix take heed, you have a successor!" and a thousand words' worth of career retrospective prose.

Though its readers howled mass cries of protest, it's a safe bet that many of those that complained most bitterly have since reappraised their knee-jerk opinion and now have a copy of *Purple Rain* hidden somewhere among their record collection. As one of the most influential records of the 20th Century it has sold 20 million copies worldwide, after all.

In later years, to much global amusement, Prince changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol (later dubbed 'Love Symbol #2') and insisting on being referred to as The Artist Formerly Known As Prince. Such indulgent behaviour has served to sideline Prince's impressive talents, but for proof of his ability as a guitarist go to YouTube and search for a clip entitled 'Best Guitar Solo Ever', where Prince shares a stage with a band led by Tom Petty and former Electric Light Orchestra leader Jeff Lynne, covering *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* at George Harrison's posthumous induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in March 2004. It will blow you away.

One of the most famous and influential guitarists of the last three decades, with a hat-trick of Grammy awards to his name, **Steve Vai** is another artist weaned on Hendrix's music. Vai's first big break came when Frank Zappa hired him to transcribe several of his guitar solos, before inviting Vai to record with him and tour as a member of Zappa's band. A student of the Berklee College Of Music, Vai had discovered his love of music (and the guitar in particular) through listening to Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, the Alice Cooper Band's Glen Buxton and noted jazz-fusionist Allan Holdsworth. But it was the way in which Hendrix used the guitar almost as a vocal instrument that would most clearly influence his own recordings, notably 1995's *Alien Love Secrets* and, five years earlier, his biggest-seller, *Passion And Warfare*, which Steve memorably described as: "Jimi Hendrix meets Jesus Christ at a party that Ben Hur threw for [legendary Warner Bros cartoon voice artist] Mel Blanc." Vai cites what he calls

Purple haze: The Artist was less interested in becoming the next Hendrix than being the first Prince Nelson Rogers.

'Hendrix take heed, you have a successor'– from a 1984 review of Prince

Steve Vai: makes his guitar talk and sing like Hendrix at his best.

Joe Bonamassa: young gun, going for it.

"the *Little Wing* factor" in his own ability to tell stories with instrumental music.

"Jimi had a real unique approach to voice leading, chord textures and chord soloing," he explained in 1995. "When I was younger I really inhaled all that stuff. I listened to and tried to figure out all of that really beautiful stuff, like *Castles Made Of Sand* and *One Rainy Wish*. That was a big influence on me."

Steve, who cut a tribute song called *The Boy From Seattle* on *Alien Love Secrets*, still rues the fact that Jimi is principally remembered "for as his wild feedback and playing with his teeth" as opposed to his ability as a writer or musician.

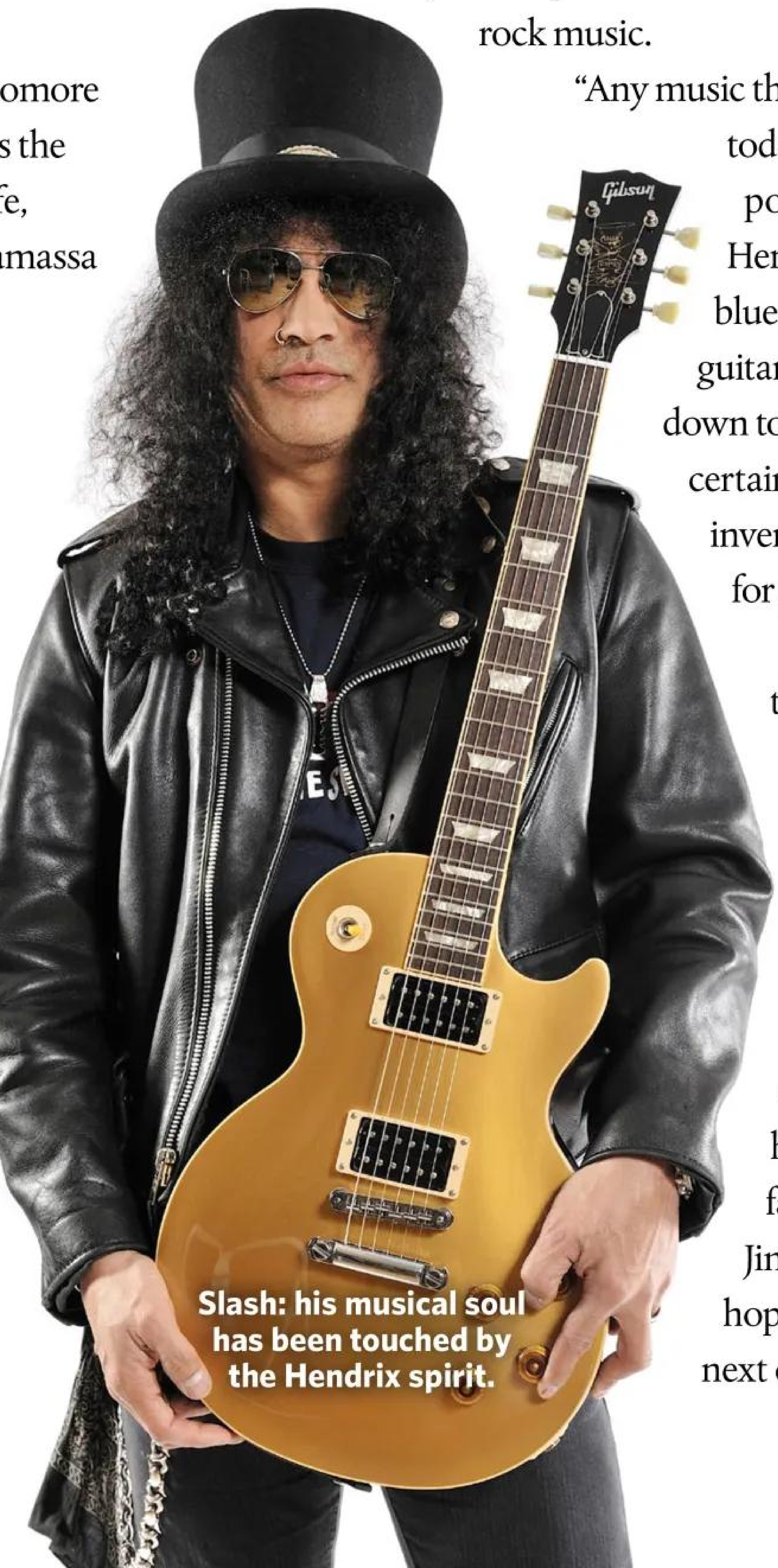
Incidentally, Vai has his own opinion on the type of music that Hendrix might be doing had he survived to be 68 years young. "Because Jimi was so creative he probably would be trying all sorts of weird things," believes Steve. "[Maybe] CD-ROMs, or something really wicked that jumps up off the screen and drags you within. But it's hard to say; he might've become like a [pure-] blues player. It's hard to conceive because, obviously, he's dead. That's just the way that fate had laid it out – he was never supposed to live any longer than that."

In the 21st century, the spirit of Jimi Hendrix lives on in the hearts of all rock guitarists, not least iconic Guns N' Roses six-string hero Slash. You only have to look at the YouTube clip of him playing *Hey Joe* with Steve Winwood and Mitch Mitchell at the 2005 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame show in London to see how close his musical soul has been touched by the spirit of Hendrix.

However, Joe Bonamassa is now probably the closest thing the 21st century has had to a Hendrix-inspired new kid on the block.

Citing Jimi's 1967 sophomore album *Axis: Bold As Love* as the record that changed his life, Upstate New Yorker Bonamassa has already amassed a catalogue of eight studio albums, and performs an average of 200 concerts each year. Having played the guitar since the age of seven he caught the ear of BB King aged a mere 10, causing the bluesman to gush: "This kid's potential is unbelievable".

Since then, Joe has shared stages with such all-time greats as Buddy Guy, Robert Cray, Steve Winwood, Joe Cocker, Gregg Allman, Warren Haynes, Ted Nugent and, more recently, Eric Clapton at his own gigs at London's Royal Albert Hall. But Bonamassa – now 33, and also a member of the latest super-group Black Country Communion (alongside members past 'n' present of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Dream Theater) – is quick to cite Jimi's supreme relevance in the development of rock music.



Slash: his musical soul has been touched by the Hendrix spirit.

"Any music that you hear on the radio today wouldn't have been possible without Jimi Hendrix," he theorises. "Rock, blues rock, heavy metal, any guitar stuff when you get right down to it – Jimi did it. He's certainly the guy who basically invented the blues rock genre for guitar players.

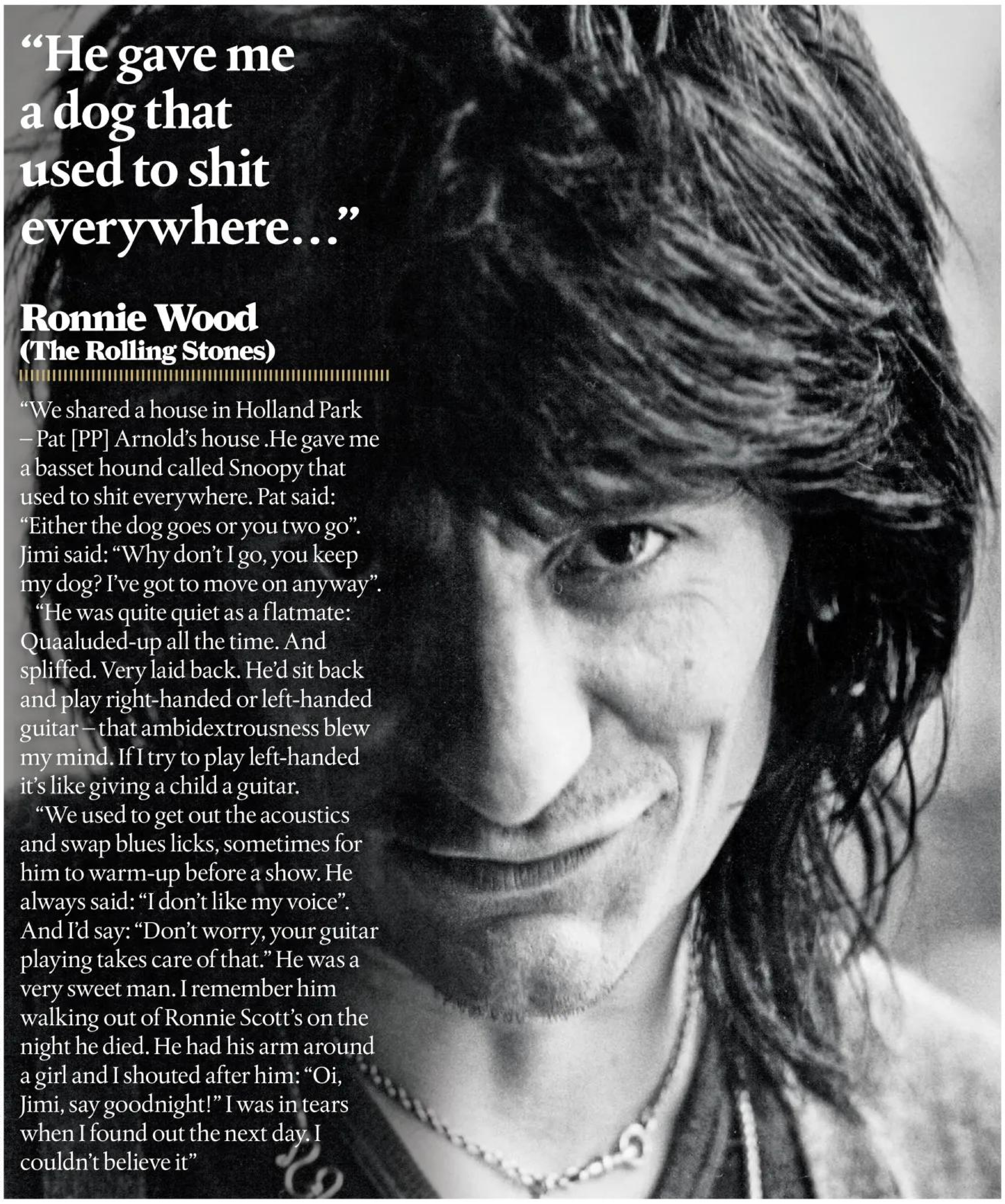
"True, you could argue that Eric Clapton [also] did it, and I love Eric Clapton like crazy," he adds, "but Hendrix took it to the masses in a way that was entirely unprecedented."

Bonamassa and the others mentioned here have done a sterling job of fanning the flames of the Jimi Hendrix legacy. Let's hope that those that come next continue to do so.

GETTY X4 SLASH: TOTAL GUITAR/FUTURE

“Nobody could beat Jimi at Risk…”

During his few short years of stardom, Hendrix crossed paths with some of rock’s biggest names. Here, members of The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, ZZ Top, Queen and more look back on their encounters with Jimi…



“He gave me a dog that used to shit everywhere…”

Ronnie Wood (The Rolling Stones)

“We shared a house in Holland Park – Pat [PP] Arnold’s house .He gave me a basset hound called Snoopy that used to shit everywhere. Pat said: “Either the dog goes or you two go”. Jimi said: “Why don’t I go, you keep my dog? I’ve got to move on anyway”.

“He was quite quiet as a flatmate: Quaaluded-up all the time. And spliffed. Very laid back. He’d sit back and play right-handed or left-handed guitar – that ambidextrousness blew my mind. If I try to play left-handed it’s like giving a child a guitar.

“We used to get out the acoustics and swap blues licks, sometimes for him to warm-up before a show. He always said: “I don’t like my voice”. And I’d say: “Don’t worry, your guitar playing takes care of that.” He was a very sweet man. I remember him walking out of Ronnie Scott’s on the night he died. He had his arm around a girl and I shouted after him: “Oi, Jimi, say goodnight!” I was in tears when I found out the next day. I couldn’t believe it”

ALL IMAGES: GETTY RANDOM CLIP-ART: BIG JOHN

“If I hadn’t been with Mick Jagger, I’d have gone off with Jimi…”

Marianne Faithfull

“I went to see him at his first show in a club in London called The Bag O’Nails. I was the only person there, apart from the roadies and Chas Chandler [Hendrix’s manager].Obviously he saw me there, and he did this whole show to me. It was magical. I met him a quite a few times, and he always came on to me a bit strong and I couldn’t do anything, I was with Mick. I would’ve have loved to. Actually, quite frankly, if I hadn’t been with Mick I would’ve gone off with him. Jimi is my biggest regret.”

"Jimi proposed we put a band together…"

Arthur Brown

"Pete Townshend saw my band playing at the UFO club and he picked us up for Track Records, who also had Hendrix. So Jimi came down to see us play, and we ended up doing various gigs and TV spots together.

"In 1969 we hung around The Scene, a club in New York, where all the musicians went to jam. When Jimi went there he liked to play bass and he didn't like to sing. I remember one occasion playing with him and John Lee Hooker. It was a dream come true.

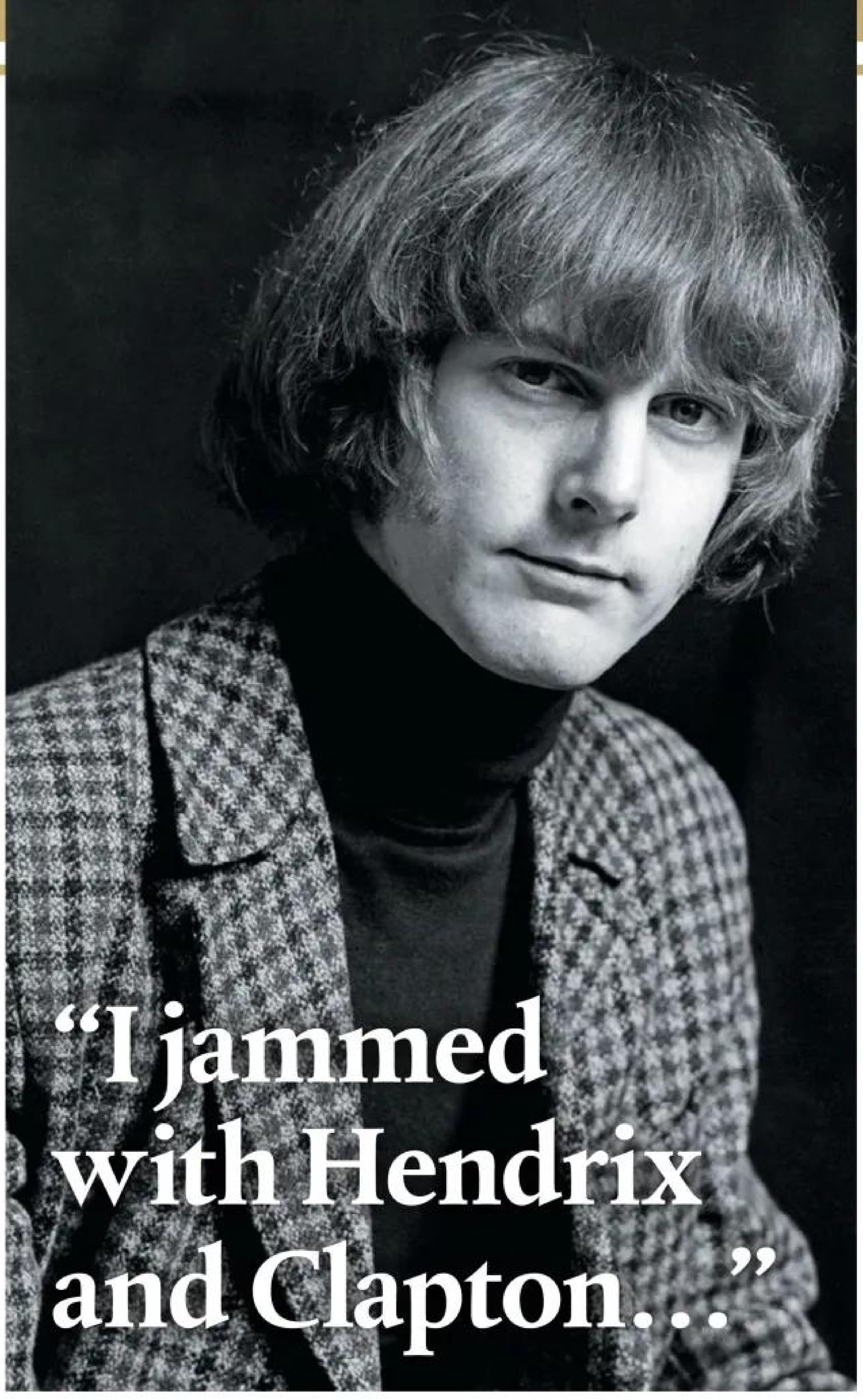
"At one time Jimi proposed that we put a band together, with me, my keyboard player Vincent Crane and The Experience. In the background he wanted tapes of Wagner and a number of big visual screens. It would be a mixture of classical, rock, jazz and R&B. But there were two things that prevented that. One was that shortly after we came up with the idea, Vincent went into a mental home. And although I loved Jimi, I wanted to go in my own direction. So I missed out on it."

"Nobody could beat Jimi at Risk…"

Graham Nash (The Hollies/Crosby, Stills & Nash)

"Mitch Mitchell used to share my flat for a while in London. He had nowhere to live for a strange period at the beginning of the Experience and I had an apartment, so he just came to live with me for about a year. I'm not a jammer, but Jimi would come around a lot and we'd listen to music. Though most of all we'd play Risk. Nobody could beat him! Jimi would drop a few tabs of acid and that was it – nobody could beat him at Risk.

Jimi was very different from the outward image that the public knew. He was very intelligent and a shy, humble man in many ways. But he created this wild man sex object persona, who happened to play the most unbelievable guitar in the world. His image became almost a trap for him. And I think that in his later years he tried to just play music rather than play up to this wild-man image. I've heard talk about Jimi and I writing some songs together at one point, but that's completely untrue. That didn't happen."



"I jammed with Hendrix and Clapton…"

Roger McGuinn (The Byrds)

"In the early days, The Byrds worked with Little Richard when Hendrix was the sideman playing guitar. We shared the stage at [Sunset Strip club] Ciro's for a month or so. Then after Clarence White joined The Byrds, Hendrix came backstage at the Whiskey A Go Go, walked over to Clarence and told him how brilliant he was. He was a big admirer of Clarence's guitar work, as we all were.

"I had the rare opportunity of jamming with Hendrix and Clapton in a loft in New York. We were at a club and Eric came over and said: 'Hey, I've got a loft nearby. Do you guys wanna come over and jam? I've got amplifiers up there.' So the three of us went to Eric's loft and it was wild. We played all these old blues songs; not really whole songs but a lot of riffs and licks. There was healthy competition between Clapton and Hendrix."

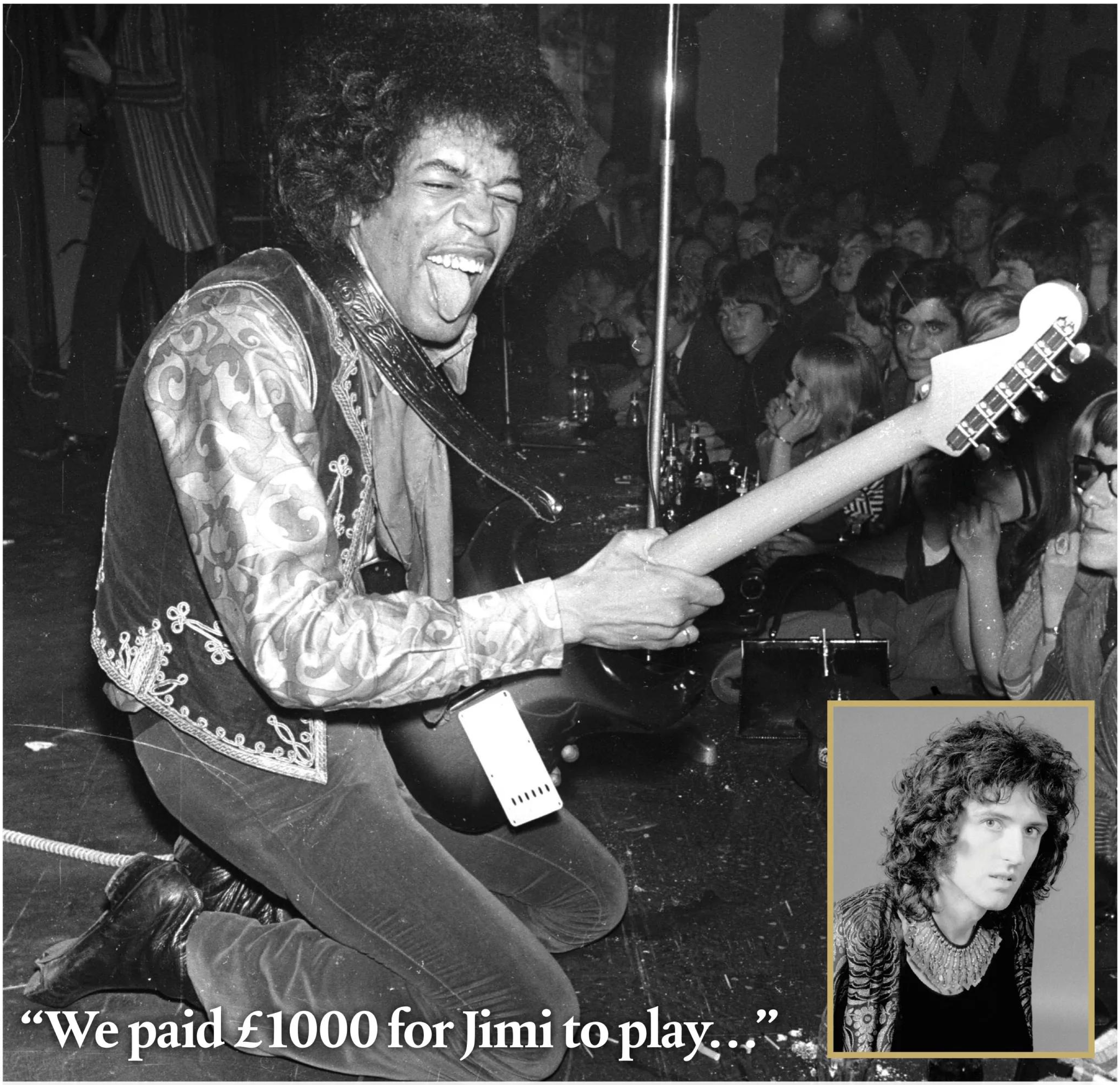
"I asked the obvious question: 'How do you do that?'"

Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top)

"We toured with him in 1968. It was a real mind-bender and eye-opener to say the least. Hendrix, either consciously or subconsciously, made a decision to invent things to do with a Fender Stratocaster that it had not necessarily been intended for. I was 18, and somehow the organisers saw fit to book us in the hotel room across the hall to his room. That was convenient to allow me to ask him the obvious question: "How do you do that?"

"This was before hotels had stereos in their rooms, and each day there would be the delivery of a hi-fi console player the size of a small Buick. It was dutifully installed for Hendrix to be able to listen to his favourite discs. I remember him playing the ass off the first Jeff Beck Group album, *Truth*. Hendrix was totally OTT about Jeff's playing. Oddly enough, Hendrix was all too willing to include blues licks in his arsenal of guitar offerings, which had fallen out of favour in the States with most black entertainers.

"I got to play on stage with him at the time, which is quite well-documented, but it was what went on behind the scenes that really captured the magic of the moment."



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“We paid £1000 for Jimi to play…”

Brian May (Queen)

“I was on the Entertainments Committee at Imperial College who booked Jimi in May 1967. We booked a lot of great groups, like Steamhammer, Spooky Tooth, America – and Jimi Hendrix. It was a sort of ball: you had three or four groups playing in different parts of the building. We paid £1000 for Jimi to come that night, and there were a thousand people in that hall. Tickets were more than a pound, so the Imperial College Union made a profit.

“This was the days of my original band, 1984. We were playing in a room at the bottom, and Jimi was on in the main hall so, yes, in a sense, we supported him. I remember, we were stood in the little corridor backstage between the stage and Jimi’s dressing room – which was actually the jazz club room where Roger Taylor and I first played together, strangely enough. Just kind of clumped outside waiting for him. Jimi came out of the dressing room and said: ‘Where’s the stage, man?’ We just pointed [starstruck]. He was the coolest guy on earth. No doubt about it.

“We got fairly close to the front. But you didn’t have to be at the front, actually. It was all-enveloping. He started *Foxy Lady*, just widdling his finger on the string very, very, very slowly, building up a feedback note. He’d just smile and laugh and move it around. He was wicked. Always that twinkle in his eye. It took a long time – then suddenly he was ready, and he was at full volume, and he just rolled into that fantastic riff.

“My memory, really, is of being overwhelmed. It was slightly scary. I thought I could play guitar at that time. I thought I was okay on guitar. But when you saw Hendrix, you just really, really wanted to give up – or try a lot harder. I looked at his equipment, and looked at him, and thought: ‘Well, he’s just a man, and that’s just a guitar, and those are just amps.’ But when he started up it was like an earthquake. It was like a cross between an earthquake, an orchestra and a whirlwind of sound. And it was apparently magical.

“But certainly, I can tell you, nobody was singing along. People didn’t sing along in those days. It just wasn’t done. It wasn’t cool, in a rock show, to sing along to *Purple Haze*. People had a lot more inhibitions, I think.

“We played *Purple Haze*. that night as a kind of tribute to Jimi, and it’s rumoured that he came down and saw me playing it. People have told me that he came in, stood at the back and watched. I had no idea.”

"He was coming from another worldly place…"

Slash (Guns N' Roses)

"Jimi Hendrix was the dominant voice when I was getting into rock'n'roll. It was Jimi's electric guitar that made rock'n'roll what it was in that period. And he's still to this day one of the premier rock guitarists. He's certainly one of the main influences in electric rock guitar."

"The great thing about Jimi is that while he was supremely technically gifted, he was primarily about feel. What he made hard to do was to actually play like him. And the only way you could really learn to play like him, to learn the songs properly, was to tap into, somehow, where he was coming from when he played them. And that was a hell of hard thing to be able to do.

"For me personally, I identified with certain things that he did that were really easy for me to learn. And then there were other things that he did that I didn't necessarily understand and that were more difficult for me to learn when I was first starting out. But the thing that makes Jimi Hendrix so hard to learn is getting his feel.

"He was definitely coming from another worldly place. It seems to me like he was coming from on high. The music that was coming out of him wasn't necessarily earthbound. It was definitely coming from a different place. When he came along you already had your Eric Claptons and Jimmy Pages, who were already doing that kind of lead guitar thing. But then Jimi comes along and plays his thing and it was jaws hitting the floor time.

"He had an incredible amount of soul in his playing and he was an emotional player. He really had an organic quality to his playing. He would play things that had been done before but when Hendrix did them it was like 'Wow!'."

"I knew him when he was Jimmy James…"

Carmine Appice (Vanilla Fudge)

"I knew him before he was Jimi Hendrix, when he was Jimmy James. We played some clubs in New York together opposite each other. And then later on we sort of found each other in London at the Speakeasy. I said: 'I recognised you as being Jimi Hendrix because of the fact that you're the only one I know that plays with your teeth!'

"We played together at this club. I was playing with this guy Ron Leejack, who was the only guy at the time playing like Hendrix. A couple of times Jimi and I had 15 minutes off, we'd go up and smoke a joint with black prostitutes on Broadway and 77th Street, which was a bad area at the time. And we'd talk about making it."

"He was shy but bigger than life…"

Mick Fleetwood (Fleetwood Mac)

"Jimi actually came to one of Fleetwood Mac's first rehearsals in London, because I'm sure he'd heard about Peter Green. He came down with producer Mike Vernon to the funny little club where we rehearsed, and I remember he was very shy, a lot like Brian Jones in many ways. Shy but suddenly bigger than life. Which is often the way with shy people. Here was this guy who'd been saying 'yes sir, no sir' to us, and then you'd see him on stage and he's eating half a Marshall amplifier."

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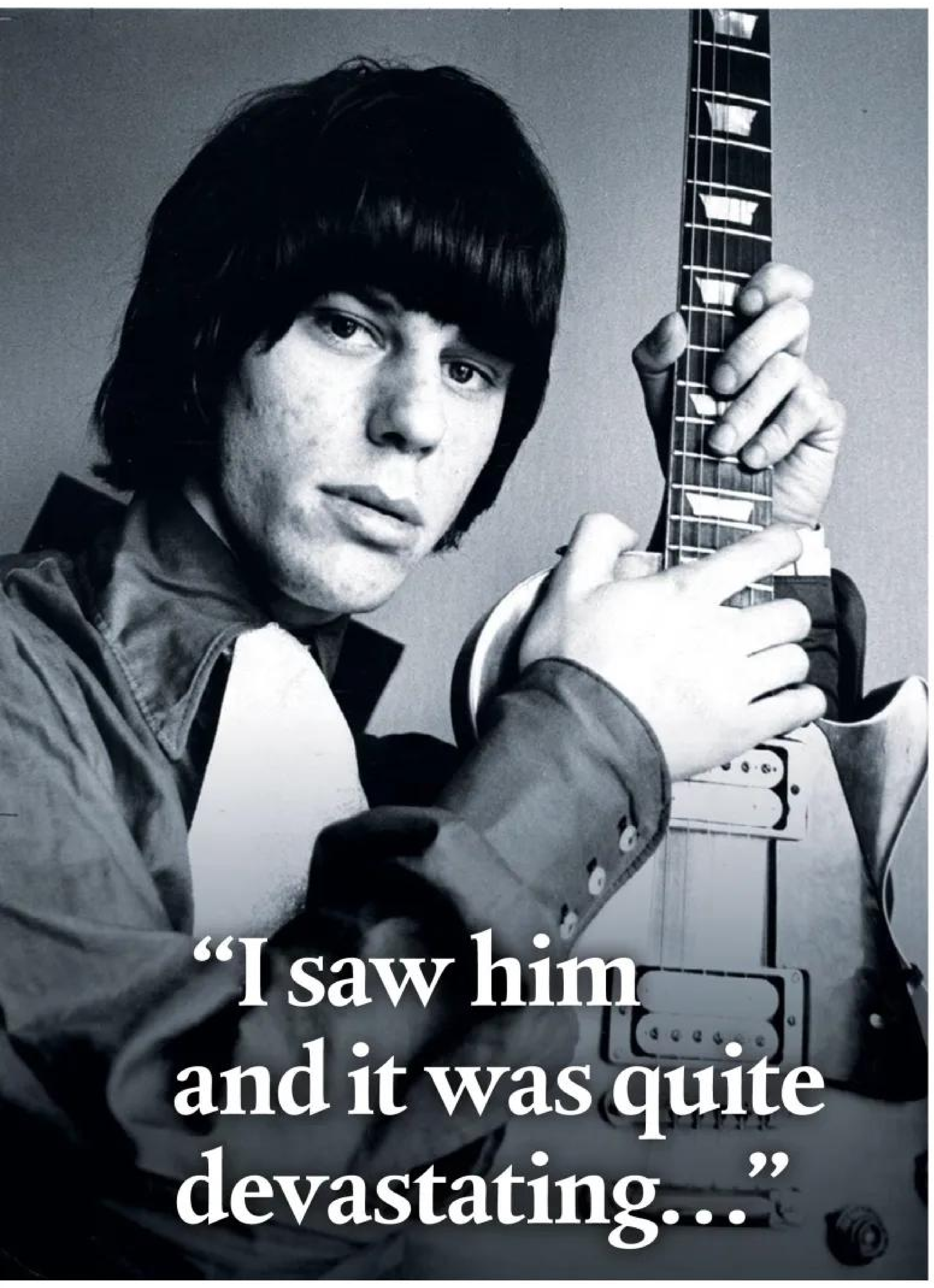
"I helped mix him at the Isle Of Wight…"

David Gilmour (Pink Floyd)

"I helped mix the sound for Hendrix at the Isle Of Wight in 1970. Not a lot of people know that. From the side of the stage with WEM Audiomasters with Charlie Watkins. I went down [to the Isle of Wight] to go to it and I was camping in a tent, just being a punter and I went backstage where our main roadie guy, Peter Watts, was trying to deal with all the mayhem, with Charlie Watkins of WEM, and they were very nervous, they were going to have to mix Hendrix's sound. I did some mixing stuff in those days and they said 'Help! Help!' so I did."



"I saw him and it was quite devastating…"

Jeff Beck

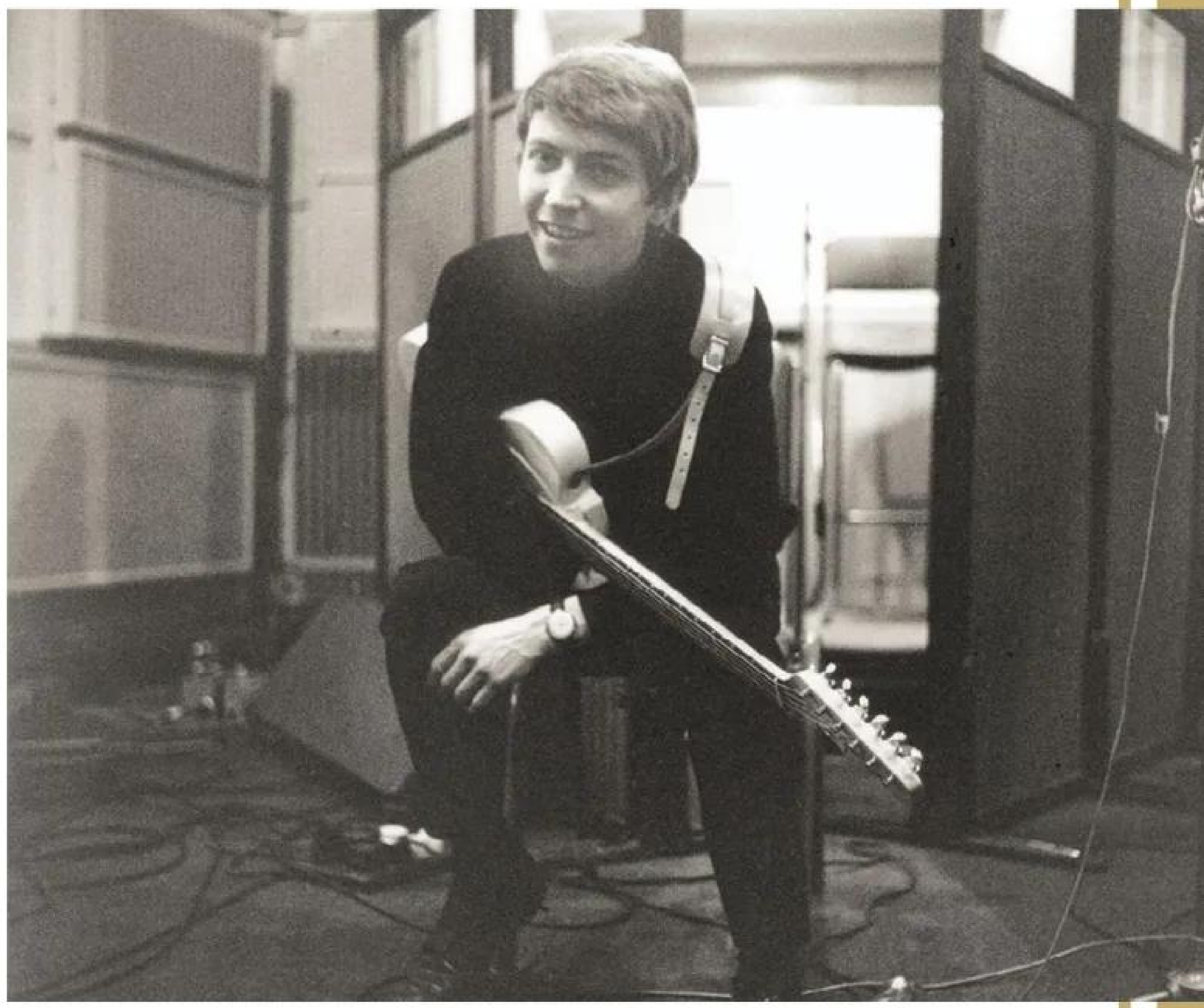
"When I saw Jimi we knew he was going to be trouble. And by 'we' I mean me and Eric [Clapton], because Jimmy [Page] wasn't in the frame at that point. I saw him at one of his earliest performances in Britain, and it was quite devastating. He did all the dirty tricks – setting fire to his guitar, doing swoops up and down his neck, all the great showmanship to put the final nail in our coffin. I had the same temperament as Hendrix in terms of 'I'll kill you', but he did in such a good package with beautiful songs.

"I don't want to say that I knew him well, I don't think anybody did, but there was a period in London when I went to visit him quite few times. He invited me down to Olympic studios and I gave him a bottleneck. That's what he plays on *Axis: Bold As Love*."

"He told me *You Really Got Me* was a landmark…"

Dave Davies (The Kinks)

"In real life, Hendrix was nothing like the wild guy that he portrayed on stage. He was a quiet, introverted guy. He was explosive on stage, but very softly spoken off it. I'd see him from time to time at the Scotch of St James or at parties. We used to exchange the odd word to each other, but it was never like we were close. I remember once sitting next to him on a plane bound for Stockholm. After a while we got talking a little and he suddenly said to me: 'Y'know, that guitar riff you did on *You Really Got Me* was a real landmark.' You can imagine how I felt. To be endorsed by Hendrix was really something. It was a great compliment."



"He went off with my left-handed acoustic guitar…"

Andy Summers (The Police)

"I was living with Zoot Money at his house in Fulham, Gunterstone Road. There ought to be a blue plaque on that house for the number of people who passed through in the 60s. It was like the party house for the London scene, every night.

"I'd heard about Hendrix before I met him because we were quite tight with The Animals, and Chas Chandler – who I was sharing a girlfriend with at the time – called me and said that he'd found this fantastic blues guitarist in New York and he was going to bring him over, and he wanted me to come and see him play.

"The apocryphal story is that when Chas and Jimi arrived at Heathrow, they came into London to go and jam at a party somewhere and they passed by Zoot's and my flat on the way. That's true, but I wasn't there. They searched all round my room looking for my guitars, which I think I'd hidden under the bed. In the end Zoot had a left-handed acoustic guitar which is what they went off with."

THE TOP 20 GREATEST JIMI HENDRIX SONGS EVER

From freewheeling guitar jams and interplanetary psychedelia to one of the greatest cover versions ever recorded, these are Hendrix's shining moments, as voted by the readers of *Classic Rock* magazine…

20 Star Spangled Banner

On the morning of August 18, 1969, Hendrix played Woodstock with his short-lived ensembles Gypsy Sun And Rainbows. Towards the end of his set, he dropped in a overdriven, distorted and generally fucked-up version of hallowed US national anthem *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Conservatives and patroits instantly claimed it was wholly inappropriate and offensive, and caused them to wretch into their own hands, while others believed it to be a noisy statement against the Vietnam War. So what's the answer? Well, it's said that by the time Hendrix took to the stage that morning, he'd been awake for three consecutive days. So the answer is anyone's guess, really.

19 Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)

Hendrix chipped away at *Hey Baby* for more than two years – christening and retitling it at various intervals along the way – and you can hear the guitarist's ever-changing moods in the shapeshifting song that finally appeared on his second posthumous set, 1971's *Rainbow Bridge*. The intro underwhelms slightly with its dour, non-committal churn. But *Hey Baby* finds its groove with the reggae-ish chop that enters after the first minute, before Jimi finds his voice ("Is this microphone on?") and the song joins the canon with the propulsive lift-off of the *"Hey girl, I'd like to come along"* refrain. That fourth album would have really been something…

Bold as love: Hendrix in full psychedelic flight.

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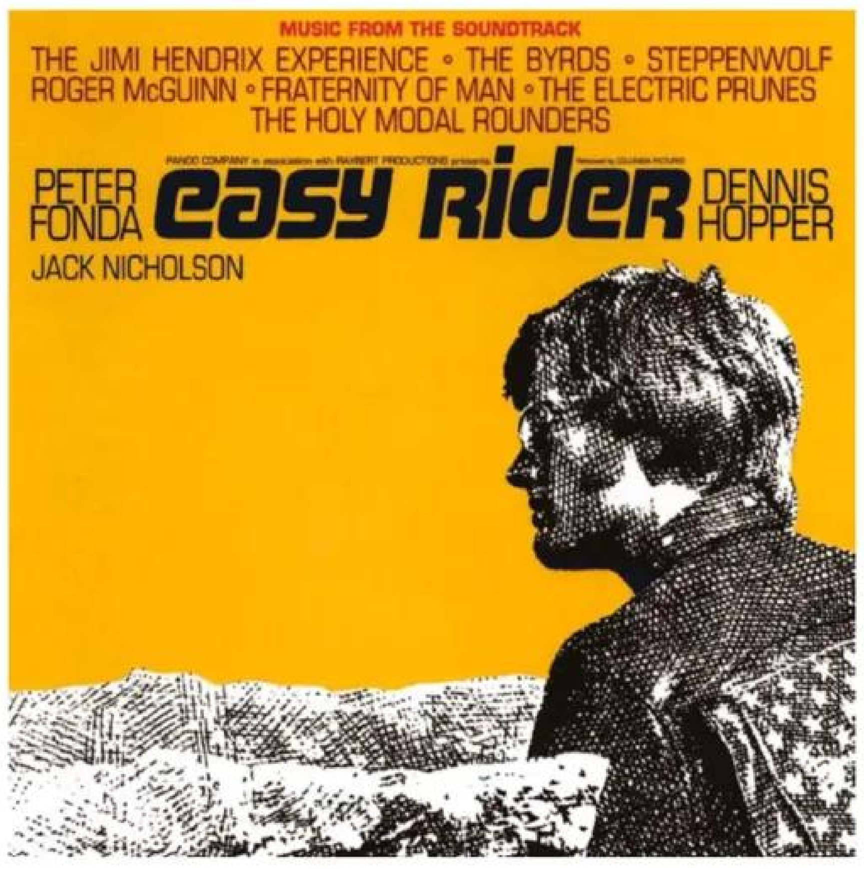
18 If Six Was Nine

Later included on the *Easy Rider* soundtrack, this psychedelic blues was the 60s counterculture in excelsis, from Hendrix's pot shots at *"white collar conservatives flashing down the street"* to the likely influence of LSD ("I didn't find out until after we finished *Axis* that he'd been taking acid," confessed producer-manager Chas Chandler). A cameo from Graham Nash stomping his feet on the track bled into a free-form outro, with Hendrix tooting on a borrowed recorder. "So here's Jimi freaking out," engineer Eddie Kramer recalled, "and of course I stick a lot of echo on. And the guys are stomping away like mad. It sounds like galloping horses!"

Theelaborate production was almost in vain, after Hendrix left the *Axis* master tape in a taxi. Redding saved the day by supplying an early mix on an arse-rough open-reel tape, and the bassist also took credit for the outro: "When we all go into three separate time signatures, that's basically an idea of mine, because we didn't know what to do at that one point in the song."



17 Manic Depression

After Chandler criticised Hendrix's interview manner as "manic depressive", the guitarist had his title, even if the lyric seemed more to do with thwarted love than mental health – *"I wish I could caress and kiss, kiss…"*. With Mitchell's muscular jazz rolls high in the mix, Hendrix's riff climbing upward through the verses, and his vocal flowing across the 3/4 metre, *Manic Depression* seemed to have no centre of gravity – and was all the better for it. That seasick vibe probably stopped its promotion to a single from *Are You Experienced*, but Hollywood Vampires' 2015 cover was a reminder that the hardcore were listening.

16 Angel

Six months after his death, Hendrix lived again in March 1971, as *Angel* led out the first posthumous album, *The Cry Of Love*, and announced that the late guitarist's catalogue would be a going concern. As you'd expect of *Little Wing*'s sister song (for a time the ▷

"Ta-dah!" Hendrix and Noel Redding with Eric Burdon (centre).

GETTY

two tracks even shared a title), *Angel* was a peerless moment of glisten and shimmer, with a valedictory chorus that seemed purpose-made for the star's passing (although Hendrix had actually written it about a dream that foresaw his mother's death). With a chorus that punctured the mainstream consciousness, for many, it's his greatest ballad.

15 Crosstown Traffic

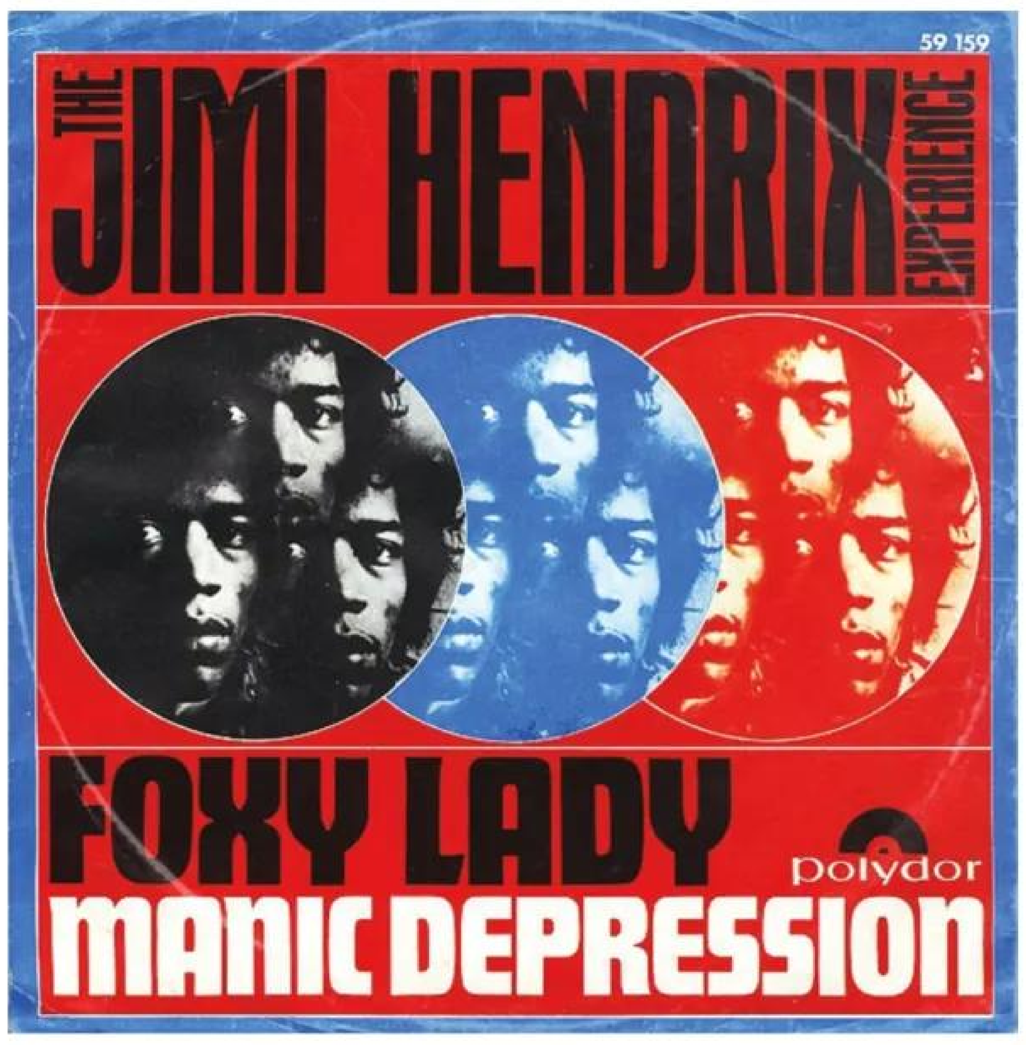
Three tracks into *Electric Ladyland*, Hendrix dropped the album's first jukebox moment and most accessible cut. For once including all three Experience members – plus Dave Mason on backing vocals – *Crosstown Traffic*'s rocket-heeled R&B would have thrilled under any circumstances, with Hendrix splicing chords and single-note runs within the same guitar part. But the pièce de résistance was Hendrix's joyous doubling of the hook, tooting on a comb wrapped in cellophane for a kazoo effect. *Electric Ladyland* had more ambitious moments, but nothing so immediate.

14 Are You Experienced?

The Experience's debut album might have opened up with *Foxy Lady*'s chart-tooled swagger, but the final straight had a bolder trick up its sleeve, with a title track that signposted the epic studio productions to come. Mitchell's military drum tattoo was the anchor of a freeform sonic tapestry that bent to Hendrix's will, sweeping up backwards guitars that were more raga than rock, a solo seemingly beamed in from another track, and a woozy call to arms that urged listener to ditch the denizens of their *"measly little world"* – far better, Jimi suggests, to *"hold hands and watch the sunrise from the bottom of the sea"*.

13 1983... (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)

By spring 1968, *Electric Ladyland* had suffered its first casualty, with Chas Chandler quitting over Hendrix's obsessive attention to detail and habit of inviting the flotsam of the New York club scene back to the studio. With the brakes off, *1983… (A Merman I Should Turn To Be)* saw Hendrix dive deeper on a 13-minute psychedelic epicthat sprawls between the backwards flute of Traffic's Chris Wood, seagull squawks created with microphone feedback and amphibious lyrics that spoke of escaping the *"fighting nest"* and "screaming pain" of dry land. It was hard to disagree with Kramer's assessment that "when Chas left, we were off to the races".



12 Foxy Lady

Few recorded sounds in '67 held more anticipation than the shiver of vibrato and feedback that ignited *Foxy Lady*. The song, when it crashed in, caught the guitarist at his hardest, hookiest and most primal, the riff's shrill payoff demanding attention every few seconds. But Hendrix rejected interpretations that the lyric was a brash ode to womanising, and it's more likely the title referred to his times with on/off girlfriend Lithofayne Pridgon. "He used to call every pet we had Foxy," Pridgon told *The Guardian*. "Or if I put on certain things, he'd say, 'Wow, you look foxy in that.'"

11 Castles Made of Sand

Eddie Kramer saw this late addition to *Axis: Bold As Love* as "Jimi's imagination run wild". Certainly, that's true of the production – the burbling backwards guitar still sounds revolutionary – but the lyric is perhaps his most grounded in reality, Hendrix tracking a disintegrating family unit that younger brother Leon claimed was their own: "That is the story of our life, about my mother and father arguing, in the first verse. I'm the little Indian boy who before he was ten played war games in the woods: that's my verse. And then the last verse is about our mother. Jimi came home and said, 'This is our family song'."

10 Bold as Love

Axis: Bold As Love's semi-title track was redolent of *Little Wing* in the opening measures, but the revelation came at 2:50, when Kramer unveiled the stereo phasing that he and tape operator George Chkiantz had used to treat the drums. "When Jimi first heard that," Kramer recalled, "he fell off the couch, yelling at me: 'Oh my god, this was in my dream!'" Rising to the occasion, for the outro Jimi played a soulful, album-best solo that climaxes with frantic tremolo picking and, according to Redding, was created on the fly: "The ending and the build-up was all spontaneous between the whole band."

9 Red House

At first glance, *Red House* hardly squared with Hendrix's iconoclast reputation. Three tracks into *Are You Experienced*, it set out its stall as a no-frills slow blues, following twelve-bar dogma at trudging pace, skirting plagiarism of Albert King's *Travelin' To California*. But at the two-minute mark – *"That's alright, I still got my guitar, look out now!"*– Hendrix elevated the song with a solo of such unadorned beauty that it equalled anything in his bag of tricks. It was so good, noted John Lee Hooker, that it would make you "grab your mother and choke her."

8 Voodoo Chile

It would never be as celebrated as its (almost) identically named offshoot, but amidst the rampant experimentation of Electric Ladyland, *Voodoo Chile* was a reminder that few could touch Hendrix on a route-one blues. Nodding hard to Muddy Waters' *Rollin' Blues* and *Hoochie Coochie Man* – with a stir of sci-fi to boot – the structure was secondary to the vibe, with Hendrix corralling Steve Winwood and Jack Casady at the Record Plant for a freeform 15-minute take that remains one of the quintessential wee-small-hours '60s studio jams. "There were no chord sheets, no nothing," recalled Winwood. "He just started playing."

7 Machine Gun

Historically an opaque lyricist, Hendrix left no doubt of the inspiration behind the Band Of Gypsys high-water mark, dedicating it onstage at the mighty 1970 Fillmore East show to the soldiers in Vietnam (and those braving riots on home soil). Scuttling on muted strings and squalling over Buddy Miles' rat-a-tat drumming, *Machine Gun* was the most visceral of protest songs, catching the dread of war. "It's so atmospheric, it's so moody, it's so stoner-rock – even before stoner-rock – and virtuostic at the same time," Metallica's Kirk Hammett told *Classic Rock*. "He really brings you there, to the killing fields."

6 The Wind Cries Mary

The gossamer lilt of the Experience's third single, according to Hendrix's then-girlfriend Kathy Etchingham (middle name Mary), was at odds with its volatile inspiration, the repentant guitarist writing it by way of apology after a blow-up over mashed potatoes: "He tastes them with a fork and says they're all lumpy. That's how the argument started."

The January '67 session at London's De Lane Lea Studios moved fast, remembered Chandler (just 20 minutes to play through with Mitchell and Redding, plus overdubs), but you'd never guess it: while London shook with blues scales, Hendrix's jazzy three-chord shift at the end of the chorus sounded impossibly sophisticated.

5 Hey Joe

Hendrix's arrival in London in September 1966 sent shockwaves through the capital's musical community. Like some left-handed guitar-playing James Bond, women wanted to be with him, and men – especially Eric Clapton – wanted to be him.

The culmination of this summer of madness was Hendrix's debut single. *Hey Joe* was a murder ballad, previously recorded by US folkie Tim Rose. The story of a man who shoots his *'cheatin' ol' lady'* and flees to Mexico was blunter than anything by supposed bad ▷

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The Experience in 1967: don't smoke the grass, stand in it.

boys The Who or the Rolling Stones. But initially *Hey Joe*, with its gospel-style backing vocals, pottered along like a regular pop song. Then, around the 1:27 mark, Hendrix's increasingly fervent vocals and stun-gun guitar took it somewhere new. The result was as exercise in menace and understatement; every slow-burn hard rock song of the late '60s and beyond squeezed into three-and-a-half peerless minutes.

4 Purple Haze

The Experience's debut single *Hey Joe*, Hendrix had complained, "wasn't us" (literally: it was a cover). Follow-up *Purple Haze* corrected that, with a brain-dump of Hendrix's myriad interests, from sci-fi to sex, and possibly psychedelics (he variously explained the inspiration as a dream of walking on the sea bed, and the "daze" of chasing an unattainable woman).

That first draft, the guitarist reflected, had sprawled to "a thousand words… I had it all written out", but Chandler, eyeing radio, helped prune *Purple Haze* back to a more palatable three minutes – without sacrificing a lick of what (arguably) nudges *Voodoo Child* as Jimi's signature guitar moment. The opening two-note jolt (an unsettling tritone interval rightly nicknamed 'the devil in music') and three-chord verse might have been a basic canvas, but with his frighteningly adept lead – taken to the stars by revolutionary use of Roger Mayer's Octavia pedal – Hendrix announced himself beyond question as the virtuoso and sonic adventurer to beat.

3 Voodoo Child (Slight Return)

The wah-wah guitar pedal was a relatively new invention when Hendrix used it to devastating effect on the unforgettable introduction of *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*, and while that intro is the song's most memorable feature, Hendrix treats the entire composition as a vehicle for expression. He alternates between rhythm and lead playing at the blink of an eye, and both riffs and solos frequently pan from left to right to add to the swaying, hypnotic nature of the performance. His guitar parts are backed up by the solid, unwavering playing of bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, who allow him the breathing space he needs to take the dynamics down and up.

Released in format somewhere between a single and

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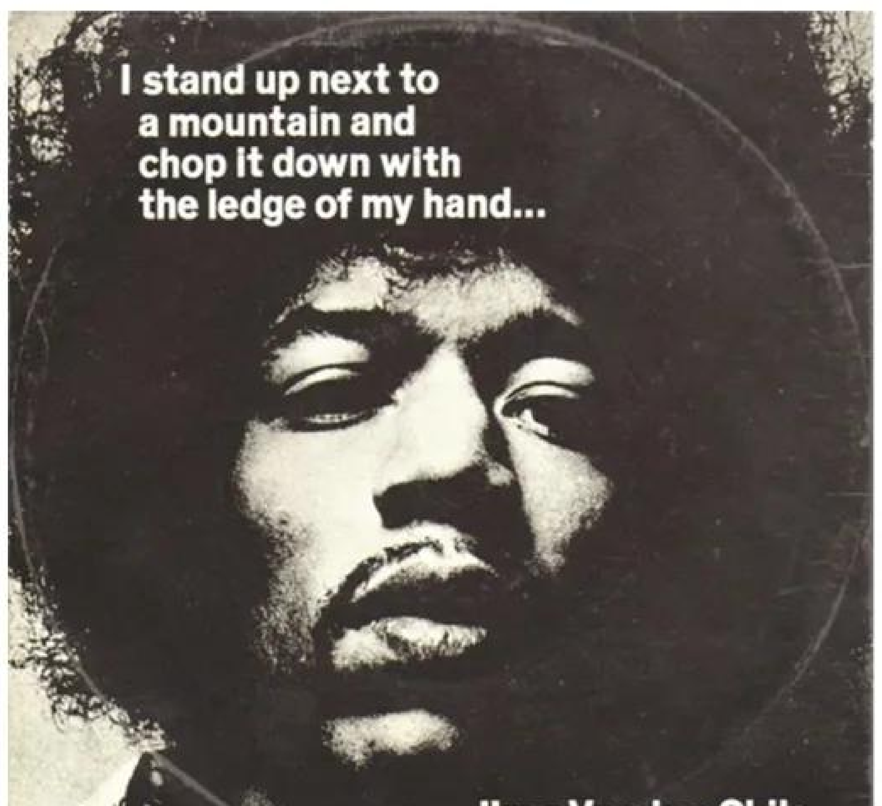
"Say cheese": Redding and Mitchell grin and bear it.

an EP, *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* was backed with *Hey Joe* and Hendrix's immortal cover of Bob Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower* – the song remains another reason for Hendrix's reputation as a man for whom a guitar was not simply an instrument. As his devotees believe, his iconic Fender Strarocaster was a vehicle for the expression of his essential soul.

2 Little Wing

If the languid guitar flourish that opens *Little Wing* sounded like it was rolling impulsively off Hendrix's fingers, the musical roots were, in truth, a little more tangled. In '66, channelling the rhythm playing of one-time tour-mate Curtis Mayfield, the journeyman guitarist had thrown similar shapes on*(My Girl) She's A Fox*, during a run with R&B duo The Icemen. That same year, after-hours loiterers on New York's Greenwich Village circuit might have heard those glistening trills resurface as Hendrix tinkered with the guitar part, honing the piano-style voicings that were only possible because his long thumb was able to reach over the neck to fret the low bass notes.



Post-fame, the lyric came faster, in a flash of inspiration at Monterey, as Hendrix imagined the festival's love-your-brother vibe personified into an"angel came down from heaven"("I figured that I take everything around," he reflected, "and put it maybe in the form of a girl").

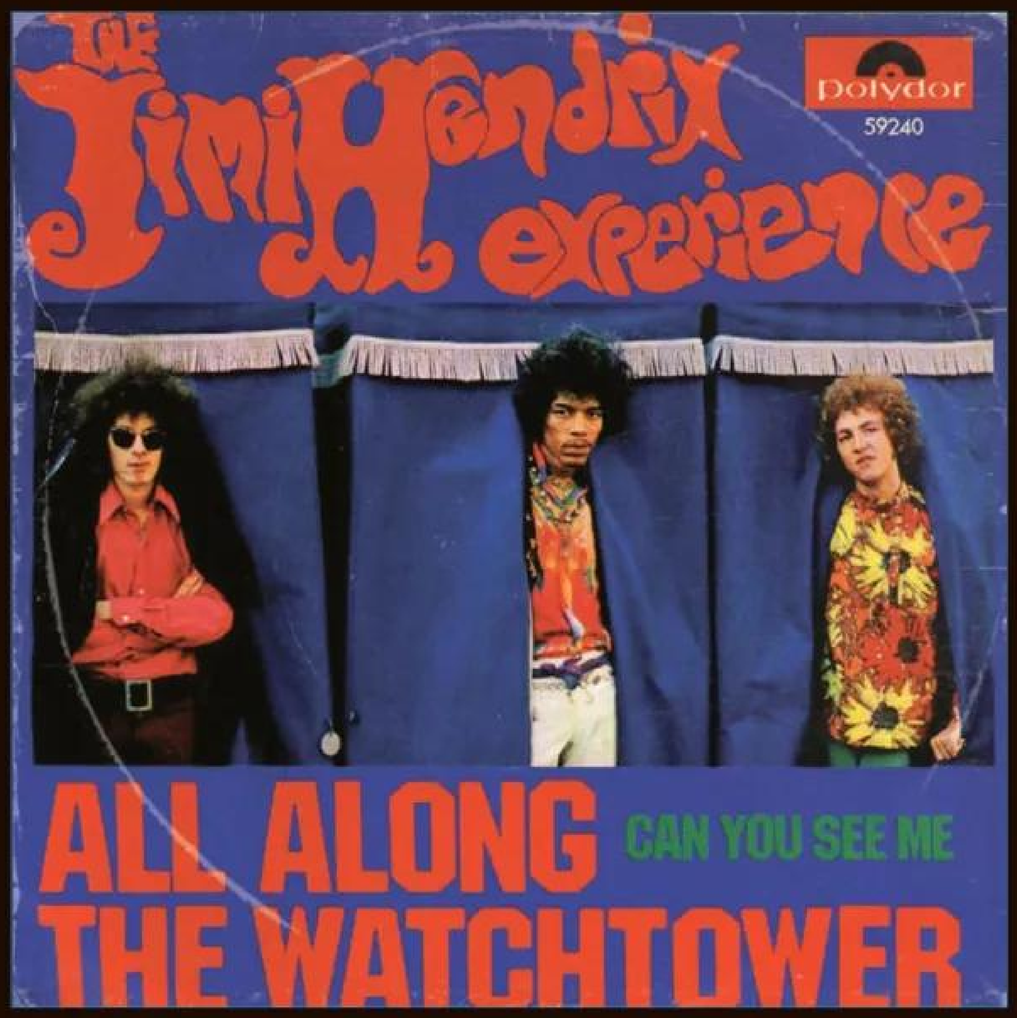
Even then, *Little Wing* could have turned out very differently. In an October 1967 session at Olympic, following on the heels of the hot-headed *Wait Until Tomorrow*, early passes were more rocking, but patently not the right treatment. Hendrix reconsidered, slowed the pace, and *Little Wing* became an ethereal masterpiece, decorated with a glockenspiel and a DIY Leslie speaker whose tremulous tone he compared to "jelly bread". "The Leslie was a tiny, handmade thing," said Eddie Kramer, "with a little Meccano set to support it and a rubber band driving a motor."

The production was perfect – but the track is defined by the cascading guitar work that later covers by Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eric Clapton valiantly chased but never quite caught. Of the Experience's three original albums, *Axis: Bold As Love* might be home to Hendrix's deeper cuts, but *Little Wing* remains a calling card.

1 All Along The Watchtower

It was, said Bob Dylan of *All Along The Watchtower*, "a small song of mine that nobody paid any attention to". But at the end of '67, Jimi Hendrix was repeatedly dropping the needle on this unloved corner of Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* LP, hearing something deeper in than the rudimentary three-chord strum.

Hendrix was a Dylan fanatic, to the point where apocryphal tales told of him clearing the dancefloor of a New York club by insisting the DJ play *Blowin' In The Wind*. But he was something more, too; the guitarist felt a deep kinship that meant he considered the two writers' oeuvres entwined, …*Watchtower* being another of those Dylan compositions so on his wavelength that "I feel like I wrote them myself".



Hendrix had been spotted around town with the *John Wesley Harding* vinyl under his arm, and had become fixated on the fourth track. "I remember Jimi said to me, 'That's the coolest song'," Traffic's Dave Mason told *Guitar World*.

By January 1968 – just a month after Dylan's original had landed – Hendrix was ready to build his own *Watchtower*, albeit within the constraints of London's Olympic Studios' primitive four-track set-up.

He squeezed out Noel Redding, choosing to overdub the bass himself. "That pissed off Noel no end," recalled engineer Eddie Kramer, "and off he would go to the pub." Drummer Mitch Mitchell remained on the stool, and might have been seen to scratch his head as Hendrix taught him how to turn around the intro beat. Likewise, across the studio floor, a guesting Mason – no slouch on guitar himself – struggled with a 12-string rhythm part that Kramer noted "always buggers people's minds up".

The session crawled on, clocking upwards of 27 takes. At least a couple of those misfires might have been attributed to Brian Jones, who fell through the door of Olympic, paralytically drunk, and commandeered the piano. "Jimi could never say no to his mates, and Brian was so sweet," groaned Kramer. "He came in and said 'Oh, let me play'. It was take 21 and we could just hear 'clang, clang, clang, clang'. It was all bloody horrible and out of time, and Jimi said 'Uh, I don't think so'. Brian was gone after two takes. He practically fell on the floor in the control room. Dear Brian…"

But the gathering reel of tape were also testament to an interpretation that was evolving at rapid pace, from a lighter and bass-free early take with Hendrix strumming acoustic, to the glowering, heavily layered studio collage of legend. That summer at New York's Record Plant, Hendrix went down the rabbit hole again for *Watchtower*'s vocal and percussion, benefitting from the quantum leap of the studio's 16-track technology. Perhaps he was never truly satisfied with *All Along The Watchtower*: "I think I hear it a little bit differently," he kept saying, according to engineer Tony Bongiovi, as overdubs came and went.

But Hendrix came back out with a masterpiece. The original had hinted at impending apocalypse, with its imagery of growling wildcats, howling winds and sinister horsemen. Yet there is a limit to the foreboding that can be summoned with an acoustic and reedy harmonica. With his interpretation, Hendrix left no doubt of the intended mood. Opening with a staccato clang of guitar and drums, followed by string bends that evoked a car alarm, the sonic impression was of a world spinning off its axis into darkness, with a little of the same gathering storm of the Stones' *Gimme Shelter*. Little wonder that decades later, when Tom Hanks' character patrols the jungle hellscape of Vietnam in *Forrest Gump*, it's Hendrix's song that soundtracks the scene.

Hendrix admitted he couldn't match Dylan for lyrics. "I could never write the kind of words he does," he said. But nobody, then or now, could touch Jimi's guitar playing. Supported by a production bed that takes in everything from looping to backwards tape effects, the solos that punctuate the song remain extraordinary, Hendrix slipping from wah-soaked flourishes, to haunted Hawaiian swoons, to the trilling single-note outro.

Kramer remembers Jimi using a Gibson Flying V, and studiously working out his path through the solo in advance. But more spontaneous was the way he grabbed for knives, beer bottles and, finally, a Zippo lighter for the slide work. "Well, there were a lot of devices that he used," the engineer reflected in *Total Guitar*. "A Zippo was one of them, but he was known sometimes to use his rings."

Released in September 1968 as the lead single from *Electric Ladyland*, *All Along The Watchtower* was not so much a cover as a song rewritten from the ground up. To hear it was to almost forget the existence of the original, which now seemed a mere blueprint by comparison. The song reached No.5 in the UK and No.20 in the US, making it Hendrix's breakthrough success in his homeland. To date, it has been streamed on Spotify almost 400 million times – more than twice the total of the song in second place, *Purple Haze*.

As for Dylan, he was magnanimous, scarcely believing what had come from his raw materials. "It overwhelmed me, really. He had such talent, he could find things inside a song and vigorously develop them. He found things that other people wouldn't think of finding in there. He probably improved upon it by the spaces he was using. I took licence from his version, actually, and continue to do it to this day."

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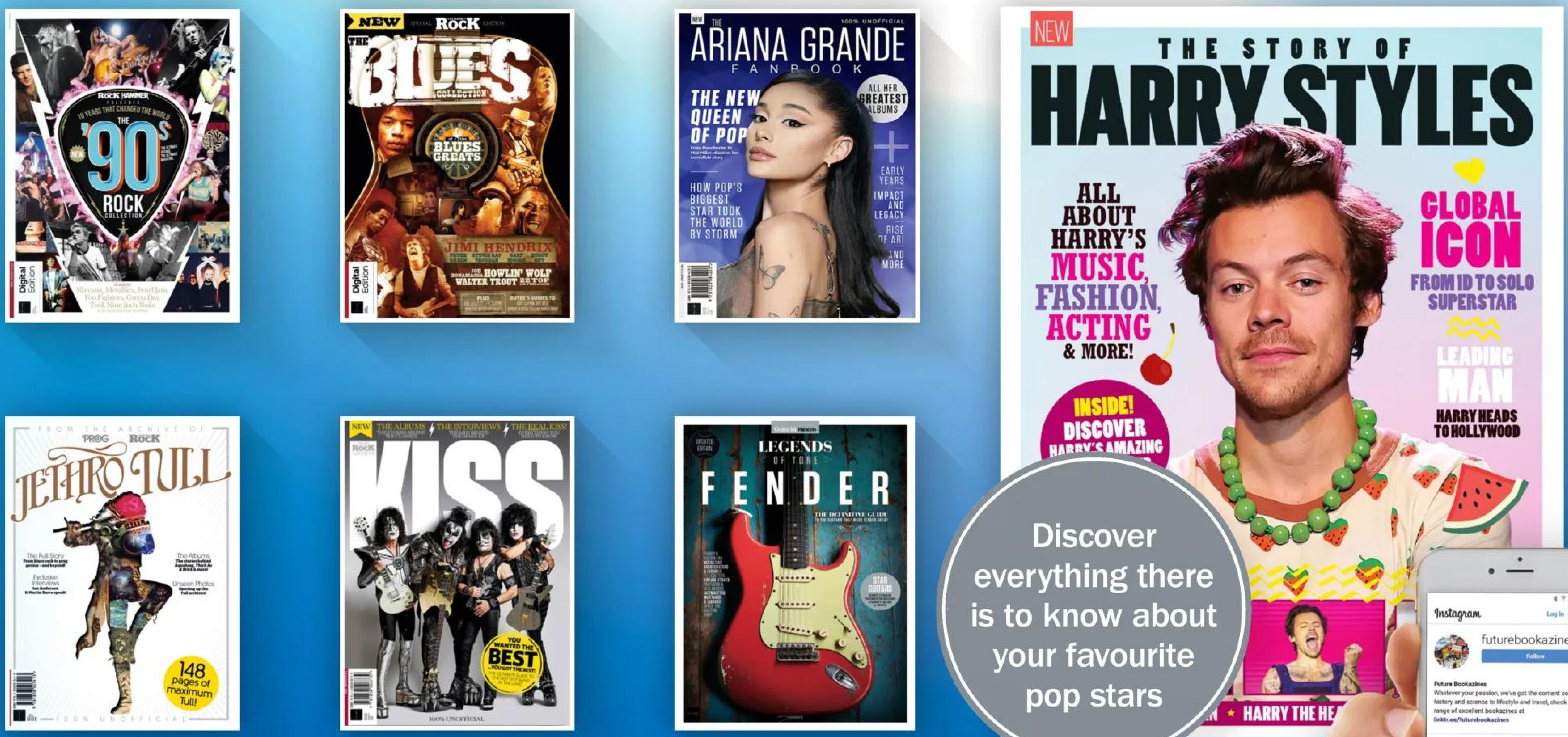

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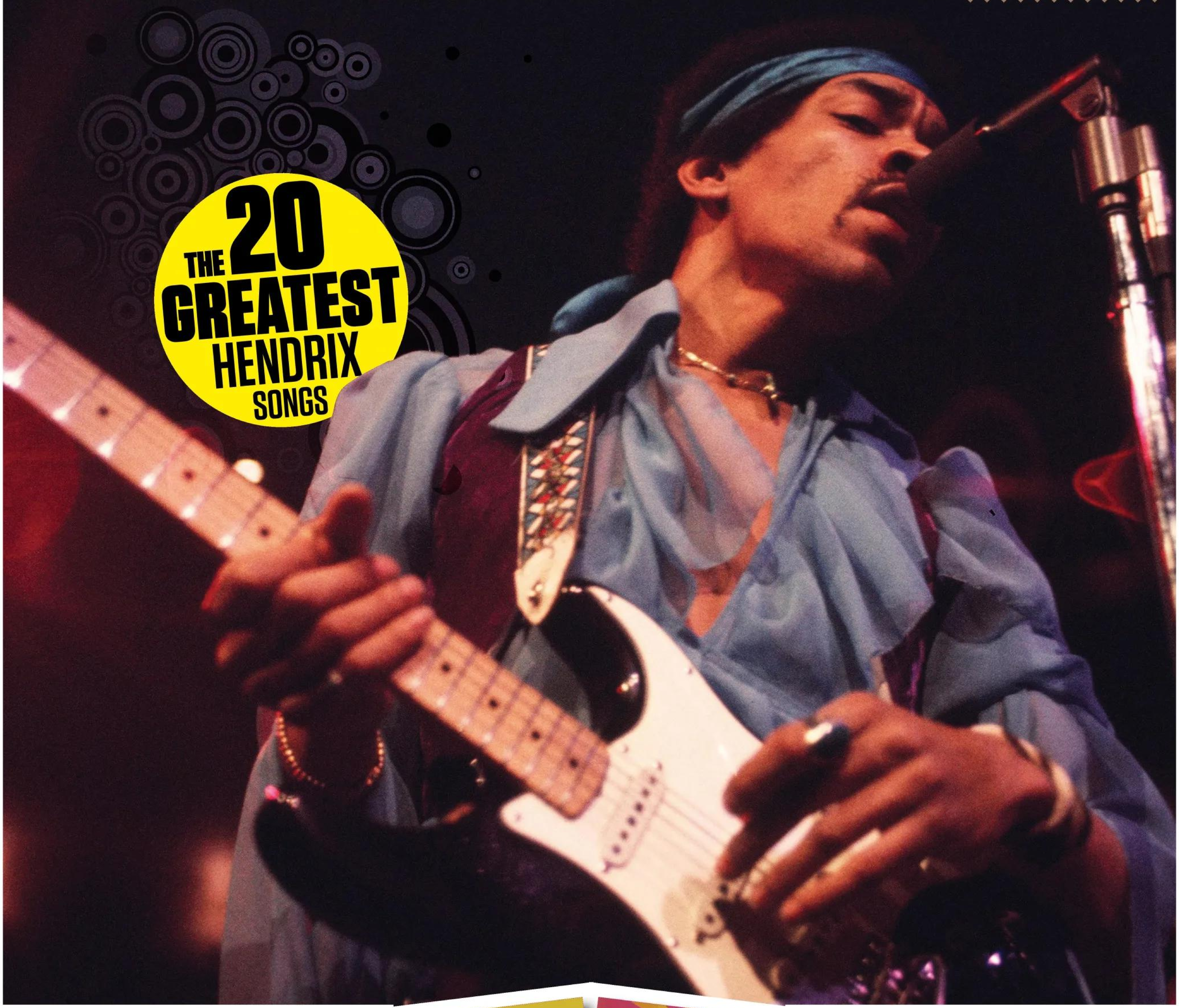

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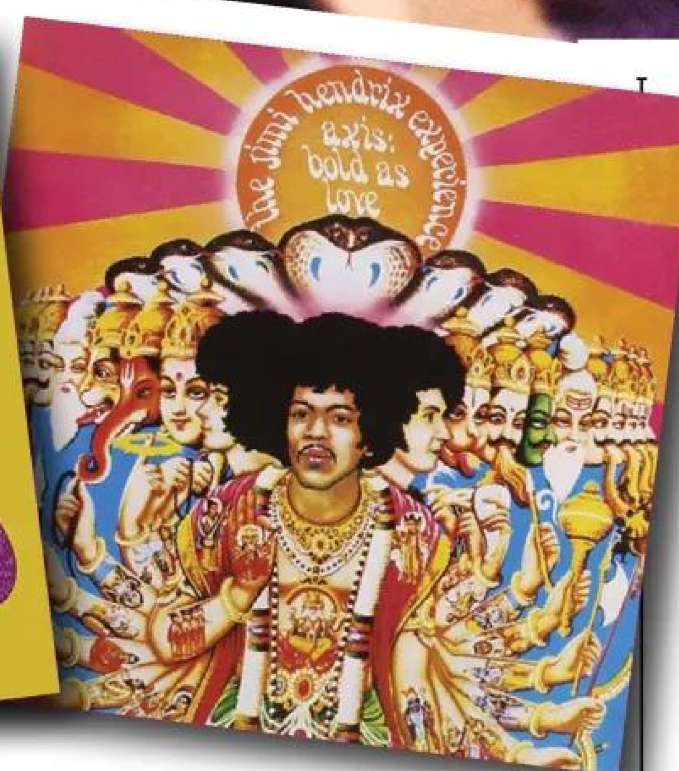

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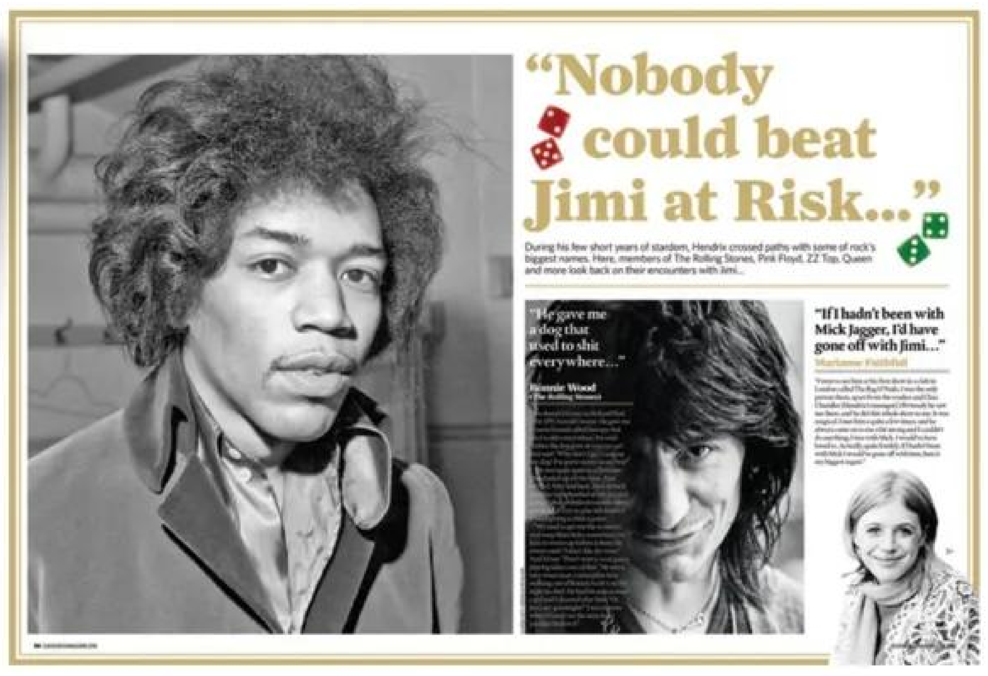

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